

Inroads: An Urban Park

Anthology

Selected Essays and Educational Materials

City of San Diego

Chollas Lake and Balboa Park

2007-2019



Park Ranger A. M. Palmer

Inroads: An
Urban Park
Anthology



Leave the road, take the trails.

- Pythagoras

In loving memory of my parents,
Thomas A. and Ruth O. Palmer,
who always encouraged me to think deeply about life
and the world.



Acknowledgements

I thank my parents for providing an endowment to establish a rich collection of books and manuscripts.

I am also indebted to a number of wonderful educators who taught me about the craft of writing with warmth and a great deal of intellectual rigor.

With gratitude, I remember Dr. Raymond Brandes, who served as my graduate advisor at the University of San Diego. His uncompromising standards of scholarship remain an inspiration to me.

I fondly remember Dr. Frank McConnell of the University of California, Santa Barbara, whose scholarly output was matched only by his great love for humanity and concern for the less remembered. His classes on “The Art of Narrative” truly helped me to understand the power of storytelling.

The archivists of the San Diego History Center allowed me to use images from their collection for my essays, for which I am extremely grateful.

And, finally, I wish to thank and acknowledge archivist Jane Kenealy, who assisted me in my research endeavors at the San Diego History Center. I found her expertise and enthusiasm to be invaluable.

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Introduction

How to Use This Book



This volume is a collection of essays, workshop materials, photo narratives, and worksheet templates created for the enjoyment of park visitors. Over the years, the publications included here have undergone numerous revisions, some for the incorporation of new material, others because of Microsoft Word updates. In any event, bear in mind that formatting differences abound from one page to another. Rather than attempt to edit everything into a single format, I chose instead to treat each piece as a snapshot, a moment in time preserved in the pages of this anthology. With that in mind, you will see things relevant to each work's initial publication, including bylines and certain pieces of artwork. Numerous variations in font and line spacing prevail, as well. That said, I feel that the final product retains the original spirit of the essays.

In terms of organization, the subjects are divided into folios, each one providing context for those that follow. The book begins with reprinted publications, variously named *Chollas Flora & Fauna*, *San Diego Archives*, and *Urban Park Essays*.

Weekly Essays

In 2007, I began writing weekly essays for the patrons of Chollas Lake, each installment introducing a topic of interest for a brief discussion. All references are cited, and information on relevant university departments and public agencies is provided, so readers can continue their research. Lifelong learning is the goal.

Photography Narrative

Urban greenspaces need to be experienced visually. With that in mind, I included a collection of my photos in this book, all of which speak to the beautiful colors and textures of our city parks.

Workshop Materials

Over the years, I taught a writing workshop at Balboa Park, during which time my students and I discussed a number of subjects, including the mid-century modern aesthetic in art and architecture, film noir, music, and the writings of John Muir,

Aldo Leopold, and Barry Lopez. Here, I included a selection of the magazines I published for each session. Note that the images I found online—which were essential for our study of the material—have been reproduced under the Fair Use Clause of United States Copyright Law. This book constitutes free educational material, produced for the public to enjoy.

A few shorter sections augment the folios. They include the book club publication, the word searches, and bonus writing prompts.

Topics for Park Professionals

Urban forestry, park design, and the layout of the Library of Congress are the subjects I addressed in this brief series. Although written with the park professional in mind, these articles will be of interest to all municipal park enthusiasts.

Exploring the Archives of the San Diego History Center

During the mid-2000s, I wrote a column for the Friends of Balboa Park. For each installment, I explored the archives and delved into the first thing to capture my attention, producing an essay on the subject. My goal was to inspire members of the public to undertake their own voyages through the many archives of the world. During that time, I also conducted two interviews with Jane Kenealy, archivist extraordinaire, who taught me a great deal. We discussed the San Diego Oral History Project at length, a program to which she contributed greatly. Those interviews are available to researchers at the San Diego History Center Archives. Here, I chose to include my essay on *The Chain of Blue*, an old film periodical, a biography on William Templeton Johnson, and a reflection on the mystique of old photographs.

Worksheet Templates

And, finally, there are worksheets at the back of the book, to help you record fitness sessions, hikes, and birding expeditions. Find your passion (legally) in a beautiful city park environment.

Enjoy!

More than anything, this is a workbook, a visual aid and a compendium of new ideas. I want you to use it as a point of departure for journeys of the mind, as you explore urban landscapes.

This book is designed for you to read a little at a time, whenever you are looking for new ideas to enliven your walks through the park. Please bear in mind that, in addition to writing the pieces, I had to do the layout, formatting, editing and proofing without assistance, merging numerous versions of Word into a unified whole, over quite a few years. For that reason, certain issues were unavoidable. I thank you for your patience.

As always, I encourage everyone to enjoy their city parks with care, remaining safe, disposing of personal litter, and looking out for fellow visitors.

Folio One

Weekly Essays





Chollas

Flora & Fauna *Special*



The coast of California is a magnificent region to explore, whether by way of hiking and backpacking, or through the pages of your favorite writers. For further reading on this subject, please consult the following resources:

- The John Muir Papers are housed at the library of the University of the Pacific.
- "Early History of the California Coast" contains a great deal of information. This article can be found at the National Park Service website.
- The Center for Biological Diversity has a section on California's coastal history.
- The papers of poet Robinson Jeffers can be found at the Yale Archives.

At the time of this writing, information on these resources is available online.

Animal Life

Coastal California



The features of our landscape support a wealth of animal life. If you have occasion to enjoy the majestic view from our coastline, take a bit of time to examine the species of the area. Since coastal animals tend to be rather nondescript, you might easily overlook the numerous life forms of the landscape. With a bit of effort, however, you will be able to observe myriad animals who have blended into the fabric of their habitat, some of which we will discuss here.

As you might expect, the animals who thrive near the ocean are fond of moisture. In *A Natural History of California*, Allan Schoenherr acquaints us with some of them.

Life abounds on the floor of any forest. In the moist coastal regions, in stark contrast to abundant shades of brown and green, the yellow banana slug excretes rich nutrients into the soil. They are the decomposers of the land, processing leaves and waste into humus. This bright creature—which stands out among the dull colors of many coastal species—enriches the soil for plant life. Interestingly, it also plays an important role in the human diet.

This slug has been a favorite food item of the Yurok Indians for generations.

If you prefer animals that are more closely associated with beauty, the monarch butterfly will be of interest. Known for its distinctive black and orange coloring, this creature holds a secret that belies its regal appearance; the monarch's bright pattern issues a warning to predators that it is bitter and poisonous if consumed. Without a doubt, however, this species is most well-known for its arduous migrations. During the height of this ritual, they fly through the Rockies, Canada and the southern reaches of Mexico. Owing to a rather short life span, it can take up to four generations for monarchs to journey from their springtime habitat to their winter home (pg. 297).

If you have the patience to examine rocks, logs and piles of debris, you will likely encounter alligator lizards and skinks. These reptiles tend to embrace a sedentary existence and enjoy sheltering close to the ground (pg. 305). Although divided into numerous sub-species, many coastal reptiles can be recognized by the black and brown patterns woven into their coloring. These animals boast one of nature's most intricate engineering designs. Take a moment to notice just how fluid their movements are as they flee from you.

Things to Remember:

When you take time to observe coastal wildlife, remember that these species are still very much at odds with human impact. The loss of habitat (as well as the use of pesticides) has left many species endangered. Captive breeding programs, and the establishment of habitat reserves, have helped in the recovery process. However, if we are to replenish the species that once thrived in abundance, a great deal of work remains.

Before you explore the coast, take some time to study the list of California endangered species at EndangeredSpecies.com. You can also find a great deal of habitat information on the California Fish and Game website. Enjoy!

Allison M. Palmer



*Nature
Graces us
with Glorious
Repeating
Patterns and
Textures*

Works Cited:

The Fractal Educators' Guide from the Fractals Foundation (pgs. 1-7).

Fractals

The Beauty of Infinite Patterns

Examine the intricate chambers of a shell, or the curvature of a fern leaf. Notice the repetition of forms, the way in which a single shape occurs over and over, each part establishing its own unison with the whole. These grand expressions of order are fractals, and we find examples of their beauty in nature, geometry and mathematics. Now, consider the fern leaf as you hold it in the palm of your hand. What does it reveal to you? One shape gives rise to myriad expressions of itself, implying the expanse of infinity, leaving us with far more questions than answers. So, in order to learn more, we will inquire into the details of this occurrence, delving ever deeper into the mystery of patterns and the splendid shapes of our world. As for the sources we will consult, reference points for our journey come from *The Fractals Educators' Guide* and the Fractals Foundation, online.

We will begin with a brief definition of the phenomenon. "A fractal is a never-ending pattern that repeats itself at different scales." We may take, as our example, foliage or nautilus chambers or any other such expression of nature, and the examples are numerous. In any case, the form in question is dramatic in its completeness; its constituents go on without end, but their pattern is not one of monotony. Rather, it speaks to the variety of expressions present within a single entity. And this notion brings us to an interesting point. Must the fractal forms be as regular in shape as a leaf or a geometric set of lines? The human neuron provides our answer.

Consider brain cells that branch in every conceivable direction. Each stem gives rise to countless progeny, resulting in a net, a pattern which could extend indefinitely without exhausting its reserve of potential forms. Now, let us take two more such instances of branching patterns. First, consider the oak tree. In its formation, a single branch begins to sprout, giving rise to a new group of sprouts and so on, until a tree of magnificent proportions is at hand. Notice how the fullness of the pattern is able to continue unabated, in theory, even if the physical manifestation of the tree is finite. Another example of branching fractals can be found in river networks, and another, still, in the formation of the human lung, itself a vast network of air passages resembling the branches of a towering oak. Are you beginning to see the depth and breadth of nature's forms and how they connect? (pgs. 1, 2)

Now, we can understand William Blake's ability to find eternity within a mere grain of sand. That a single part may somehow contain a shadow of completeness is a poetic and philosophic notion. The world itself shows brilliant evidence of this. Now, let us examine the science behind patterned order more closely; it is more than a lovely notion favored by poets. "Self similarity" can be found in so many places that its mechanisms insist on being examined.

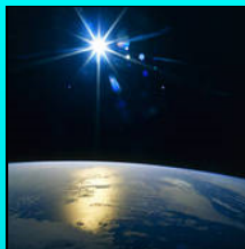
We can explore fractals by mathematical representation, as well as visual inspection. In fact, their presence is, in its essence, our perception of mathematical relationships. Consider the Sierpinski triangle, a purely geometric fractal composed by "repeatedly moving the middle triangle of the previous generation" (pg. 6). The pictorial representation will show how a triangle within an identical shape begins to contain more and more examples of itself, ad infinitum. In fact, by following the simple instructions in the *Fractal Educators' Guide*, you can draw this project yourself. Find some graph paper, a straight edge and a pencil, and you are ready to begin. Now, after you explore this simple example, you may wish to proceed into the realm of algebra. The guide continues with the Mandelbrot Set, a simple equation discovered in the 1980s: $Z_{\text{new}} = Z_{\text{old}}^2 + C$. To create shapes, you begin by plugging a value in for the variable C . Let's see exactly how this equation generates an infinitude of beautiful patterns.

Simply stated, a starting value of C , once squared and then squared again, will usually tend to get bigger. In theory, it will continue to increase in size infinitely. In the Mandelbrot Set, we see an example of how a starting value of C can actually become smaller or simply express its size within the scope of a fixed set of values. These *decreasing* values establish the points within the Mandelbrot set. Outside of it, the value of C retains its typical exponential characteristics. The resulting image is quite dramatic. Expressed pictorially, we see a mirror-image pattern of black (representing the Mandelbrot value of C) and, outside of it, a dazzling array of colored shapes. What is the difference? The colored shapes surrounding the black image represent the value of C as it causes the equation to expand infinitely at different rates of speed. In other words:

$$Z_{\text{new}} = Z_{\text{old}}^2 + C \text{ (pg. 7).}$$

We have only just begun to explore this rich and fascinating subject. Whether one chooses to examine the patterns of a leaf, or delve into mathematics, the beauty of fractals is easy to discover. For those of us who are not scientists, we can appreciate how art and poetry are informed by the shapes of nature and mathematics. Consider this the next time you pause to study the remarkable shapes of a leaf or the branches of tree. Their forms lay the groundwork for infinite patterns, revealing a level of order rarely imagined.

Allison M. Palmer



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Chollas Flora & Fauna

Special

Astronomy: The Stars

As points of intrigue and mystery in the night sky, stars have always delighted us. The ancients found their way and pondered with awe according to these distant lights. Now, as we reflect on the science of space, let's examine its main constituents a bit more closely.

As any glance skyward will reveal, stars on a clear night are abundant, increasing in our perception the farther we venture from city lights and pollution. However, these appearances prove a bit deceptive when we consider just how many stars can be seen by the naked eye; surprisingly, fewer than 6,000 can be viewed without the aid of a telescope, a fact which makes the ones in evidence all the more impressive. Pollutants obscure about half of the night sky, rendering only the most luminous stars perceptible to us (Fred Watson, *All of Astronomy* pg. 124). When we consider brightness, we must keep in mind that luminosity has to do with distance as well as the life stage of the star in question. Those likely to die young will bum their nuclear fuel at a rapid pace, gracing the sky with their immense size and emitting a great deal of heat as they mature. In comparison, stars of notable longevity tend to be cool, small and far less luminous. Their modest use of energy will help them to persist for a greater length of time (ibid.).

Often, when creating metaphors, we associate abundance with grains of sand. In similar fashion, stars invoke a poetic sense of the infinite. And there is good reason for this association; stars are the most common constituents of the universe, building blocks one might say. They fill innumerable galaxies and surround planets with light and energy. Without their compelling presence, space would remain dark and cold, each region of the sky blending, without tangible distinction, into the next. In our galaxy, known as the Milky Way, there are between 100 and 400 billion stars, a presence which adds remarkable light and contrast to the darkness of space.

Although we tend to think of stars mainly for the light and heat they offer, they also produce a vast array of chemicals as their lives progress. In fact, every metal on earth, from gold to iron—even the iron found in blood—originates in the chemical processes of stars (ibid.). How have we learned all of this?

Over time, scientists have learned much about cosmic processes by testing theories and watching the vast skies. Once cloaked in the mystery of darkness and distance, a great deal has been revealed about the lifecycle of stars, as they are born in clouds of opaque gas. By way of careful observation, scientists have established a considerable body of knowledge. To begin making sense of it all, let's see how these abundant forms are composed (Watson, pg. 127).

A star, in its most basic composition, is hot ionized gas, a sphere of plasma that rotates and produces chemical reactions. The key to its development has to do with flux and the constant shaping of energy it undergoes. We are all familiar with the fact that life manifests change. However, in order to give off its most brilliant light, a star must enter into a period of relative stability. It begins in the throws of violent change and gradually subsides into midlife repose. At the outset, a vast amount of thermal energy is built up as a new star's core is heated by gravitational contraction. Eventually, this energy builds to the point of counteracting the pressure of gravity. In so doing, the star begins its period of stability and shines with the grandeur we associate with heavenly bodies. In fact, our sun is currently enjoying this phase of existence. The often overbearing heat of midday attests to this fact (Watson, pg. 129).

The easiest way to appreciate stars is to forgo the rigors of science and simply enjoy their beauty. We can observe the skies and find amazement without knowing the science behind stars. This much is simple. However, if you wish to structure your viewing, consider making use of monthly sky maps. These implements are quite helpful for enhancing your understanding of the stars. A typical map will show, from any point on earth, not only the constellations but also the entire celestial sphere. You will see groups of stars, region by region, as they are at a given moment. In other words, you will find a technical snapshot of the night sky by making use of these maps.

If you want more information on the science of stars, check the MIT Press website for a listing of new books. You can learn more by contacting their professors of astronomy to ask specific questions.

Allison M. Palmer

URBAN

Flora & Fauna Essays



Archaeology Doorway to Our Past

To the archaeologist, time and space reveal the substance of things past. Through the strata of an excavation site, bones and artifacts emerge to create a record of another time, something like a doorway through which we can glimpse long-forgotten cultures. In order to understand this process, and the insight it lends, let's examine some key aspects of analysis.

Before we inquire too deeply as to the scope and practice of archaeology, we must remember that it is a certain type of anthropology, the study of extinct rather than living people. In short, it is the discipline most often associated with understanding antiquity. It is similar to the study of history in that archaeologists explore the sequence of past events, offering a narrative of how things may well have transpired at a given place and time. Their reconstructions enable us to understand the ways in which extinct cultures have shaped the present day (James Deetz, *Invitation to Archaeology*, pg. 3). However, the archaeologist is not alone in this endeavor. Materials recovered from an excavation must be examined by botanists, geologists and soil experts, among others. And, within recent years, DNA analysis has become a common tool for study of the past. What took place and when did it happen? What are the most probable explanations for material remains? Aside from technical analysis, we must also study the ways in which societies are created (ibid.).

Culture, that uniquely human invention, is something we learn, a practice passed down from one generation to the next (Deetz, pg. 6). Everything from the foods we eat to our style of dress and codes of conduct derive from this source. Culture is, to a large extent, the transmission of values and tradition. But how does this mechanism function and leave us with material remains to study? There is a certain order to culture. According to Deetz, it is "patterned," an integration of habits and customs that is systematic. And this is important, for without some sense of underlying order to human society, neither past nor present would be intelligible. So, it falls to the anthropologist to study a culture's elements. For example: art, architecture, politics

and language are all of interest to the anthropologist. Each endeavor yields clues about the culture in question. But how does the study of living, thriving communities differ from examining the dead?

Archaeology is unique in that material remains form the basis of inquiry. Without some sort of ruins, or the presence of bones, the archaeologist will be unable to reconstruct past events. And this eventuality would be a disaster for anthropologists as well as historians. The archaeological record can augment the annals of history by helping to confirm where people lived, what they ate and the rituals they performed for their dead, among other things. The work of archaeologists also aids those who study living cultures, by providing insight into the origins of custom and tradition. Their goals may be different, but in all cases physical evidence is essential to the task. However, in order to present the archaeological record in a meaningful way, an orderly method of study must be utilized. Deetz outlines three levels of archaeological study.

First, researchers must employ observation. Using specific field techniques, they excavate and assess materials in a way that yields useful information. Next, at the second level of study, archaeologists will attempt a description of what they have unearthed and observed. The goal is to record where it was found, how old it is and what it looks like (Deetz, pg. 9). The third level of study brings the unearthed material into a larger social context. How did these remains function within a given time and place? Which aspects of culture and social relationship do they reflect? In short, the archaeological record comprises material culture, geography and fossils, as well as the activities of humankind. And, if we are to understand what these remains are telling us about past societies, we must read them alongside documentary evidence and oral traditions.

Society transmits elements of culture from one generation to the next. And, in order for archaeologists to fathom this process, the material in-hand must be read as a sort of narrative, a plausible rendering of past events. However, as we have seen, success in this area requires standardized methods of excavation and analysis. Are you ready to begin your own research? If you wish to learn more, resources abound.

For a fascinating glimpse at museum artifacts, photos and visual resource information, visit the Princeton Department of Art & Archaeology online. The information furnished here will provide a starting point for your studies. For local projects, and data sharing opportunities, visit the San Diego Archaeological Center. And remember to keep a field journal to record your findings. Enjoy the adventure!

Allison M. Palmer

*Archeology
sheds light on the people
and places
of human history.*

Deetz, James. *Invitation to
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San Diego Archives

Archaeology

Reveals South Broadway

The subject of archaeology brings to mind distant lands and the romance of movies. As Hollywood would have it, a heroic figure runs through the flames of an ancient temple and braves uncharted lands to uncover a secret, something of unimaginable worth. However, the reality of things is generally quite different; the work is laborious and, more often than not, yields not the grand discovery of treasure but the modest formulation of what daily life resembled in the past; the archaeologist gathers up the dross of days gone by and patiently assembles a picture of how humans of another time lived and died. In this issue of *San Diego Archives*, we will examine how this process has taken place locally.

In 1981, Ray Brandes and James Moriarty, of the University of San Diego, directed their students in an excavation of the downtown area. They examined the rubble of South Broadway in order to see what the archaeological record of the site would yield. The focus of the project involved providing the Center City Development Corporation, or CCDC, with a report on the material culture of nineteenth century downtown San Diego (Roger Showley, "Downtown Site Holds Relics", *Union Tribune*, Sunday, May 17, 1981). As it happened, a great store of information awaited their discovery.

Although finding a cache of brilliantly rendered artwork, or the luxurious weapons of a king, would be exciting, most archaeologists delight in more prosaic excavations; they work to fathom the ways of ordinary people in order to tell the story of daily life and struggles. University of San Diego archaeologists were able to accomplish this by unearthing key artifacts prior to the urban renewal of South Broadway.

Through the ages, new cities have been erected on the debris of their predecessors. With this, the lives of those who came before us recede a bit further into the recesses of memory, one generation at a time. Fortunately, all is not lost. From this oblivion, archaeologists rescue

our collective past for study and preservation.

This much is clear. But apart from the discovery of treasure—or recovery of streets and buildings lost to memory—what does the archeologist generally find?

Most certainly, the people who lived in San Diego during the nineteenth century did not leave a legacy of splendid treasure. What they did bequeath to us, however, is vastly more valuable; from their everyday material culture, they left us a narrative of their lives, a glimpse of the past which sheds light on the present day.

In their progress report to the CCDC, Brandes and Moriarty revealed that they had found nearly 40,000 artifacts, everything from dentures made with real human teeth to an effigy doll of Spanish origin. In addition, something called a "hell box" was located in the area as well. This item was roughly the size of a pillbox and contained highly explosive bits of nitroglycerin (ibid). The men who carried such implements would use them to loosen rocks from construction sites, creating one little explosion at a time. These artifacts, which proved to be some of the most telling of the excavation, offered clues about daily life.

As archaeologists know, we tend to learn the most from ordinary people and not from those who leave behind precious metals and the remnants of luxury. The old clothing, utensils and tools of the masses yield the most useful depictions of life. Such was the case during the excavation of South Broadway. In fact, just as pottery shards tend to be the most abundant remnants of ancient sites, so the presence of glass proved to be considerable for the University of San Diego project. In fact, according to Brandes, it comprised most of what they unearthed.

While glass shards revealed the concentration of settlements, and their daily routines, less common items like dentures shed light on medical practices of the time. From the odd objects, like effigy dolls and explosives, we discover a diversity of cultural practices and commercial endeavors, the foundations of our modern city. With backhoes, researchers opened deep privy pits into the dirt of South Broadway. From there, a picture of the past emerged.

The next time you place garbage by the curb, or find yourself discarding an old pair of shoes, consider what a wealth of information you are leaving to posterity. The most ordinary bits of material culture yield the greater part of our knowledge; your discards will create a narrative of San Diego history for future generations.

Allison M. Palmer

San Diego Archives

Irving John Gill Architect of San Diego

A culture develops its character and prominence for a number of reasons, not the least of which has to do with architecture. From great historical monuments, to the most modest dwellings, buildings symbolize the ideals and aspirations of their respective societies. John Gill, protégé of Louis Sullivan, must have been well aware of this as he established himself in San Diego. In this issue, we will examine some of the ideas and innovations Gill developed as he celebrated the brilliance of simplicity.

Undoubtedly, most students of architecture recall Sullivan for his steel-frame “skyscrapers,” the structures that established an American vernacular style known as the Chicago School. These bold forms asserted the commercial prominence to which the country aspired. And it was within this dynamic atmosphere of creativity that Gill learned his craft from 1890 to 1893, a few pivotal years of study and experimentation (Rita Gillmon, “Gill Houses Still Livable After 70 Years,” *The San Diego Union*, March 18, 1973).

From the beginning of his career, Gill was eager to establish himself beyond the Midwestern firm where he had trained. And Coronado, California presented him with an opportunity to realize his ambitions in 1888. It was during this year that the city proclaimed itself as “the coming place to build a home” (ibid.). Just as Sullivan defined the commercial building style of Chicago, and Frank Lloyd Wright changed the face of architecture with his designs, Gill developed his own innovations for the homes of San Diego; chief among them was his treatment of volume and natural light, expressions of style for which he is still celebrated. Above all else, Gill understood how to render his structures more practical and comfortable, forgoing traditional designs when he felt the need to innovate.

While Sullivan made great use of ornamentation, his famous protégé preferred to focus on simplicity

and craftsmanship, establishing a new set of standards with his designs. Comfortable austerity thus became synonymous with luxury. The residence of Mary Cassitt, designed by Gill and constructed in 1899, provides a tangible expression of this vision.

Those who cherish San Diego’s architectural achievements will likely be familiar with 1127 Florida Avenue in Coronado. The Cassitt house is a “nine-room beach cottage finished in shingle” (ibid.). What makes this home stand out among its contemporaries? One of its defining characteristics has to do with light. Bereft of eastern ornamentation, Gill’s design could have become too austere. However, his treatment of light takes full advantage of San Diego’s ideal climate; in the Cassitt house, Gill’s placement of windows may appear haphazard, but it provides for abundant light and a greater sense of volume, establishing the sun as a focal point of design (Gillmon).

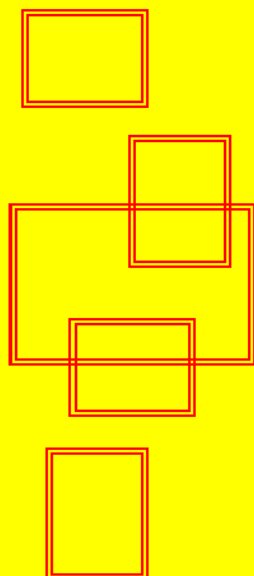
Gill was also known for his development of functional interior elements. While his dislike of decorative forms may have been aesthetic, there were also practical reasons for his unique style. For example, he favored the use of rounded corners to join walls and floors in order to minimize the buildup of dirt. In addition, Gill elected to place patios and porches with each room in order to grace the entire house with sunlight (ibid.).

More than a mere innovator of design, however, Gill was known for his modernist belief in the social benefits of architecture. His numerous projects—from the George W. Marston House and the Ellen Browning Scripps Residence to the Bishop’s School in La Jolla—attest to his ideology. Credited with a cubist style, Gill’s emphasis on the practical aspects of cleanliness and the use of natural light came to fruition in San Diego. And, for this reason, he can rightfully claim his place among the luminaries of the Arts and Crafts movement; Gill established a sense of comfort and order in the modernist style and graced our city with some of its most splendid pieces of architecture. Examples abound. So, please venture beyond this brief essay in order to learn more about modernism, San Diego architecture and the work of John Gill. For further reading on the subject, you may wish to consult *Irving J. Gill, Architect* by Bruce Kamerling.

Clearly, John Gill created something of a California aesthetic with his treatment of light and functional elements, and we are richer for it. I thank Rita Gillmon for the article that enabled me to interpret his work here.

Allison M. Palmer

Chollas Flora & Fauna *Special*



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Found Objects Our Material Culture

Perhaps the greatest joy of a walk involves the process of mindful discovery, those moments during which you see an object of curiosity as it emerges from the landscape. But how does this take place? To find something implies that it was once lost to our perception. It may well be the remnant of a forgotten past or even an item we have often overlooked, one which is now able to capture our attention. In either event, what was once ignored, or hidden by the landscape, emerges into plain sight when it is "found." Let's examine how the activity of finding an object can enrich your daily walk.

A refreshing walk can lead to interesting discoveries. In the park, for instance, you will find a wealth of natural forms awaiting your attention, branches filled with innumerable shades of green, berries, flowers of the season, and the peeling bark of trees. All of these elements await the mindful walker, the one who endeavors to take notice of things. Now, consider how much more one can discover when attention is given to one item among many. Look around and take notice of a fallen leaf or a piece of litter. Now, reflect upon this new discovery. Consider what the object says about the environment and what it might reveal about the people of the area. Such careful attention to detail allows us to decipher objects and see what they have to tell us about culture and geography. Now, this notion leads us to an important question: do we mainly consider found objects to be things of the natural world?

A found object can be something rendered by human effort, a forgotten item or an artifact of considerable value. However, it can also be a leaf or a twig that captures your attention, a beautiful reminder of nature. In short, a found object can be an example of material culture, something made by humans, or an element of the natural world. As you examine your own

discoveries, consider where things originate and ask questions about how they are used.

An item deliberately rendered by human effort has a purpose, be it practical or merely decorative. If your found object was made by someone, ask yourself what its purpose may have been. In the case of litter or a new article of clothing, the answer may be obvious. However, if your found object dates back a century or so, it may be more difficult to determine what it is or why it was made. Older items present the observer with unique challenges. Perhaps the object in question is a rock shaped for ceremonial purposes. Or, it may be a metal implement rusted beyond all recognition. In either event, how would you be able to identify it?

While a field guide will assist you in identifying geologic formations and plant life, understanding material culture studies will help you to analyze artifacts. Whether you have discovered a Neolithic tool or an old belt buckle, you will likely wish to learn more about who made the item and how it was used. *Material Culture Studies in America*, an anthology of essays edited by Thomas J. Schlereth, is a great place to commence your study of artifacts, and learn about the found objects in your midst.

The next time you go for an afternoon walk, take note of the things in your path. Is there a golden leaf on the ground before you? Did you discover a rock shaped by human effort? By endeavoring to find the answer, you are revealing an object's hidden past. And, in so doing, you may discover something about the people who lived, worked and died in the place where you are walking; herein lies the beauty of the found object.

Consider the theories, methods and practices you wish to employ in analyzing your discoveries. You may wish to keep a notebook or a photo journal to document the things you find while walking. From there, your entries can be used as material for stories and art projects, as well as artifact analysis. The options for study and creative expression are numerous.

For more information, visit the material culture studies program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison online. Here, you can learn about the latest research in this exciting field. Enjoy your studies.

Allison M. Palmer

Chollas Flora & Fauna Weekly



*A Garden
Reflects the
Seasons of Life
with Fragrance
and Color.*

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The Garden

Our Timeless Endeavor

Gardens symbolize the bounty of our greatest efforts. Whenever we liken our success to a splendid cultivation, or see in our labors the wealth of a great harvest, the earth's produce has given us a wonderful metaphor. Gardens serve to remind us of the riches and the frustrations we invite with our cultivation of the soil. In this issue, we will consider two books on the subject: *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* by Robert Pogue Harrison and *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* by Michael Pollan.

Harrison begins his exploration with philosophy in mind. The idea that our experience of life manifests like a garden, flourishing or falling away according to the season, is not new. However, Harrison shapes it into a meaningful inquiry. He begins with an examination of what it means to be human and live according to the rewards and struggles of activity. "Out of this extension of self into the world was born the love of something other than oneself (hence was born human culture as such)" (pg.9). In his view, outward cultivation means that the world has become our focus, that we have reached outside of ourselves in order to advance the greater good. With this in mind, the garden can be viewed as the literal (and symbolic) gift of our labor. For Harrison, it is this cultivation of life and land which locates us within the temporal world, a notion derived from Hannah Arendt. "What distinguishes us in our humanity is the fact that we inhabit relatively permanent worlds that precede our birth and outlast our death, binding the generations together in a historical continuum" (ibid.). In this view, our lives unfold between that which preceded us and those things which will remain after our passing. Here, the garden becomes a useful symbol, as the gift of our labor, nourishment for the greater good that will outlive us.

So, these philosophical notions may give you pause, as you stand in the moist and fragrant soil of your own little flower garden. Indeed, they offer a great deal to consider as you survey the abundance of your land. To what extent is your garden, as the focus of your delight and frustration, symbolic of human existence? Above and beyond the array of

bright flowers and vegetables flourishing before your eyes, what can you perceive? According to Harrison, our cultivation gives form to the world, establishing communal relevance where once only personal pleasure existed. "Form giving is crucial to the socialization of pleasure, which in turn is crucial to its endurance and stability. Such socialization domesticates the wilder egotistical impulses of the individual . . ." (pg. 85). Here, we have a sense that the garden can transform our aspirations, making them socially relevant, an effort to enrich others and not just ourselves. With this in mind, we can see how Harrison's garden becomes a space of philosophical inquiry as well as a medium for growing food and flowers. Now, let's consider issues pertaining to the garden in its literal state, leaving figurative spaces aside for the moment.

Examining the broader view of gardens is fun and illuminating. However, for anyone who has ever cultivated the land, there are many practical concerns. For an account of the joys and sorrows of gardening, we turn to Pollan.

"I soon came to understand the distance between the naturalist, who gazes benignly on all of nature's operations, and the experienced gardener, who perforce has developed a somewhat less sentimental view, particularly toward woodchucks" (pg. 51). Pollan reminds us, as we reclaim the earth for our own designs, that nature will often challenge even our humblest intentions. For him, the greatest exemplar of this truth is the woodchuck, the persistent, determined animal who coexists with the land we endeavor to tame. No matter how patient or extreme his efforts, Pollan's guile was no match for the survival prowess of this creature. Alas, how often do we find our humble vegetable gardens bereft of produce? Woodchucks, rabbits and gofers remind us of the more practical realities of gardening; we are providing their food.

As we have seen, gardens give rise to philosophical and practical notions. And, in both spheres, acceptance has its virtues. So, what happens when we make peace with the presence of insects and rodents? "For the gardener, breaking free of the notion that art always negates nature is liberating" (pg.60). In Pollan's view, our produce gardens and ornamental horticulture must coexist with the legions of "pests" they invite. The gardener, at his or her best, is happy to include the idea of balance, whether the labor in question is intellectual or physical.

For centuries, our cultivation of the land has brought questions to mind. On a practical level, we must understand how to grow our preferred plants while curtailing certain others. Philosophically, we can view gardens as symbols of human existence, flourishing and subsiding with the seasons of life.

Allison M. Palmer

CHOLLAS

Flora & Fauna Weekly



Blue pigment

*was once made
from lapis lazuli
and treasured
for its elegance.*

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BLUE

Shades of the Atmosphere

Allison M. Palmer

Azure is the shade of the planet, a color that stands in contrast to greenery and blurs the distinction between earth and sky. As such, it conveys a great many things. With that in mind, let's explore the wealth of this hue, from the pigments used to create its various shades to the philosophical ideas it invites. Its history is rich; over the centuries, blue has enabled painters and poets to depict the human atmosphere.

Today, countless colors grace paint stores, offering a variety of hues with names as noteworthy as the shades they describe. However, there was a time when certain pigments were cherished not only for their luster but for their scarcity. In medieval Italy, what was known as ultramarine, or *Oltramarino*, literally meant "from beyond the sea," a term used in reference to paint as well as other treasured items. As for the blue pigment, it was made from lapis lazuli imported from mines in Chile, Zambia, Siberia and Afghanistan (Victoria Finlay, *Color: A Natural History of the Palette*, pg. 281).

For the sacred nature of their paintings, Italian artists insisted on obtaining the expensive hue. Considering the difficulty with which it was acquired, it is no wonder that blue was associated with our highest callings. In China, the mineral cobalt was mined with great effort and used to tint their finest porcelain (ibid.). Keep in mind, however, that once the chosen mineral was

obtained it had to be worked into a useful form. And it was certainly never easy to render this color; in order to create the delicate shades for which medieval art was known, a great deal of work had to be done. In her attempt to fathom the wealth of this primary color, writer Victoria Finlay studied the task of making paint.

Lapis lazuli, a combination of minerals, must be purified of its extraneous contents in order to become useful. To achieve this, a skilled color-maker must mix powdered lapis with resin, wax, gum and linseed oil for as long as three days (pg. 291). Only then is the cook able to extract the treasured blue. The process involves putting the dough into a bowl of wood ash or water, kneading it with sticks and finally pressing the concoction for hours until it becomes the desired color. After that, the liquid is poured into a bowl and allowed to dry into powder (ibid.).

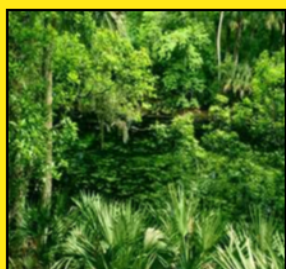
With such techniques of master craftsmanship, it is no wonder that medieval paintings have survived for centuries. With skilled conservation, they can be seen in light of their original splendor for years to come. Now, with this in mind, let's return once again to the subject of nature.

Think of the potent nutrients available in blue/green algae or the view of our planet from the vantage point of space. Clearly, shades of blue indicate the presence of life. But there is also a sense of mystery attending this color. We often express intangible conditions such as a mood or a sense of the risqué by invoking blue. What makes this hue so compelling?

Perhaps the value we attribute to a certain color stems from our desire to see it. We often describe the winter sky for its gray mist or blackness, lamenting the temporary loss of azure. We call upon blue to cheer the heart and soothe the restive mind. Wherever we see this color, it recalls the embrace of sky and the vast reach of our oceans. Although red and green are some of nature's most powerful hues, blue is compelling for its calming qualities. It shelters our world from above, and beckons us to explore the mysteries of human existence.

CHOLLAS

Flora & Fauna *Special*



*Green
surrounds us
and offers a sense
of nature's endless
mystery.*

G R E E N

The Wild Hue

Allison M. Palmer

Green, in its myriad shades, is the color of nature. It brings to mind the presence of life and suggests abundance. As you begin your walk today, consider not only the extent to which green represents the natural world, but notice the symbolism it conveys. Aesthetically, it is a rich and complex color. Numerous stories and artistic renderings utilize green as a narrative element. So, with this in mind, let's take a few moments to reflect on the mystery and complexity associated with this color.

Whether you are walking at the lake, or driving through the urban landscape, the verdant hue is ever-present; vegetation abounds in every corner of the city. Now, notice the various shades of green that thrive here at Chollas. From the main road, you will see a number of plant species as you walk. The infinite detail of shape and color that abides within each leaf is amazing. If you look closely at the salt bush of the dam, or examine one of the eucalyptus trees, you will notice that some leaves are darker than others, blue being more apparent than yellow. When these variations are seen from a distance, shades of green provide rich texture and invoke a sense of mystery—the mystery of nature as it surrounds us.

As you explore the main road of the lake, look up from time to time; you will see a sheltering canopy of light and color, a multitude of leaves swaying against a background of blue sky and clouds. From this distance, green reminds us that nature is an all-encompassing presence even

in the midst of urban life. Now, consider what people of the past felt as they wandered through forests and meadows. For them, the known world was surrounded by wildlands. Works of art and literature attest to their respect for the power of nature and reveal some of their fears. Often, they depicted the wilderness in anthropomorphic form.

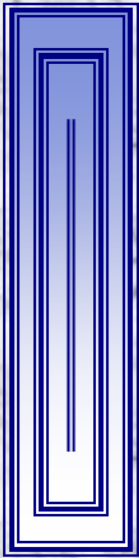
In medieval architecture, you can see rich depictions of a being called “The Green Man.” His face was typically rendered with leaves and the haunting presence of vines, a reminder of how our predecessors envisioned nature as they constructed their great cities. Renderings from the Middle Ages were, however, not limited to art and architecture. In addition to visual representations of the green world, works of literature also attest to the mystery of forest life.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a member of King Arthur's court accepts a challenge from the Green Man. The verdant knight, who cannot be killed by the tale's human protagonist, reminds us of nature's regenerative powers. The Green Man stands as an embodiment of wilderness, always prepared to challenge the human agenda. From the Middle Ages to the present day, green—the hue of nature's mystery—has found a place in countless stories and works of art.

Whether we study the minute detail of leaves at the lake, or study medieval works of art and literature, we find the mystery of green to be pervasive; it surrounds us. And, in addition to that, its literary usage is rife with paradox and symbolism. Consider the fact that green is associated with wealth and abundance, but it is also used to represent envy. And it is the shade of inexperience, novices often being called “green” as they begin their careers. The verdant hue is indeed one of mystery and complexity.

As you enjoy the lake today, take note of the different shades of green that abide with us. Notice how they change as afternoon light gives way to evening. Mystery abounds.

To learn more about colors, medieval architecture and literature, visit your local public library.



*Legends
of the majestic wolf
abound
in the folklore
of many indigenous
peoples.*

Chollas

Flora & Fauna Special

The Gray Wolf

Meditations on Mystique

The wolf is at the door. Or, perhaps it has recently donned sheep's clothing in order to trap the unwary. Are these images hauntingly familiar? Our cultural imagination has depicted the wolf as a threatening stranger, one who lurks on the fringes of primal fear and misunderstanding. In truth, these animals were more often victims than aggressors, as their habitat disappeared and their numbers dwindled. In this issue, we will examine the romantic mystique of the gray wolf, as we consider its great relevance to the North American landscape.

As a point of departure, we can explore the relationship Native American tradition has enjoyed with this animal. Edwin Wollert, Education Coordinator of Wolf Song of Alaska, lends useful insight on this subject. "The Navajo word for wolf, 'mai-coh,' also means witch, and a person could transform if he or she donned a wolfskin" (Wollert, *Wolves in Native American Culture*). He goes on to inform readers that the Navajo called upon wolf powers in their healing ceremonies. In general, Native American tribes admire these animals for their hunting prowess and the unity of their packs. When we contrast these mythic images to fairytale renderings of wolves devouring small children, the distinction is compelling.

Legends of the shape-shifting wolf abound, as do stories of its craftiness and magical healing powers. Clearly, this animal figures prominently in our imagination. From indigenous tales of admiration to stories of wolf-like savagery, our ideas of the wolf vary greatly. However, one issue which

transcends fiction is the reality of the wolf's fragile existence in our wildlands.

Gray (or timber) wolves once roamed the continent of North America in vast numbers. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, they were second only to humans in their distribution. However, their numbers were depleted due to unregulated hunting. At present, wolves thrive mainly in Alaska, the Northwest Territories and Canadian provinces with rare occurrences in North Dakota. According to the National Wildlife Federation, conservation efforts have been successful in reintroducing wolves into many of their traditional habitats.

As for their description, these animals are canines which closely resemble huskies and German shepherds. Wolves are typically a combination of gray, brown, white and black. They can reach 5 feet in length and weigh as much as 145 pounds. Living, on average, 8 to 13 years, the gray wolf can make its home on the tundra or within forests, feeling equally at home in grasslands and deserts (National Wildlife Federation).

Owing to the size and strength of these animals, they evoke our fears as well as our deepest admiration; the wolf is a master hunter, a member of a strong community and, above all else, a stalwart survivor in the face of daunting odds. If Native Americans considered wolves to be agents of change and healing, and settlers dispatched them with impunity, it can be said that each group was merely investing the wolf with its respective values and fears. Regardless, the gray wolf has persisted as a treasured feature of the North American landscape and thrives in our imagination.



Allison M. Palmer



Chollas Flora & Fauna Weekly



*Consider
the strange
elegance
of dusk
as you explore
your favorite
park
and await
the coming of
night.*

The Mystery of Dusk

Our protagonist stands on hill overlooking the city, long shadows passing over him as the day subsides. What will transpire in the ensuing moments? Will he turn away from his vantage point and walk into the approaching darkness? Will he remain in a rigid stance as daylight fades and a few dim stars begin to emerge? Against the backdrop of a departing sun, anything seems possible. To filmmakers and casual dreamers alike, this prelude to darkness is exciting; the time preceding nightfall—when sunlight gives way to fluid shades of orange, purple and mauve—creates a sense of expectation, an eagerness to discover the adventures of the coming darkness. So, let's take this opportunity to explore the approach of dusk, from its scientific relevance to the creative expression it inspires.

Moments preceding the arrival and departure of sunlight are rich and complex. From casual observation, it is nearly impossible to identify the exact moment of daybreak or glimpse the arrival of night. Why is this? Let's begin with the phenomenon known as twilight glow or dayglow. *The Encyclopedia Britannica* defines it as a "weak, widespread and relatively steady glow from the sky that is observed around twilight; it is part of the overall phenomenon called *airglow*." This process is marked by an array of visible changes. In short, airglow takes place when air molecules and atoms absorb solar ultraviolet and x-radiation and create a moderate amount of luminescence, enough to light the earth's upper atmosphere with a subtle glow (ibid.). While such moments are beautiful, the timing of these events is of equal interest. Although we consider every bit of light associated with sunset as dusk, there are actually a number of well-defined events taking place. Occurring after twilight, dusk is a time during which the sky usually remains blue. By contrast, twilight is generally associated with the beauty of ambient light. Both of these atmospheric events are marked by specific locations of the sun in our sky.

Now, we have an overview of what takes place as a prelude to darkness; a portion of the earth is beginning its retreat from the sun. With such a magnificent display, it's easy to understand why this daily

occurrence is associated with mystery. Shades of soft color precede sunlight or indicate the day's end, offering a vast yield for poets, novelists and painters alike. Let's take a look at some of the art inspired by this mysterious time of day.

There are numerous examples of twilight paintings and poetic renderings of dusk. Many artists are masters of depicting variations of light. By far, one of the most brilliant is Claude Monet, the French painter whose brush strokes and use of color were initially called "impressions" rather than finished works. For our purposes, perhaps the *House of Parliament (Effect of Fog)* and *The Doge's Palace Seen from San Giorgio Maggiore* offer two of the most compelling examples of Impressionism, a technique for which Monet was celebrated. Note that both of these paintings can be viewed on the Metropolitan Museum of Art website.

House of Parliament features the light of late afternoon as it filters through a subtle presence of fog. This painting was one of many Monet produced during his study of the Thames River. His brushstrokes and use of color make the building appear as a soft shadow looming under the sun. The time of day is depicted with dark shades; forms are ill-defined, and the sun seems almost hesitant as it mingles with the advancing fog. Monet's technique creates a rich experience of ambient light, giving us a sense of how difficult it is to perceive shapes as they emerge from the darkness. In the same fashion—although rendered with a more dramatic treatment of light—*The Doge's Palace* establishes the time of day, rather than the forms being depicted, as the central theme. Pink light rises to illuminate and engulf the walls, while simultaneously creating a sense of movement within the water. With this, Monet brilliantly captures a fact of biology: humans see quite poorly at dusk and dawn. Familiar shapes are glimpsed yet remain difficult to perceive; airglow, with all of its inherent beauty, drapes our world in mystery.

To learn more about atmospheric sciences, visit the Department of Land, Air and Water Resources at the University of California, Davis website. You can learn about the various areas of study associated with this science and correspond with faculty.

Allison M. Palmer



*Memory
is the province
of the heart
as well as the mind.*

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Chollas Flora & Fauna *Essays*

Memory & Perception:

A Few Digressions Inspired by

Daniel H. Peck

Memory and perception are linked on a number of levels. In this issue, we will consider how their combined influence helps us to understand ourselves and those who surround us. How is it that memory serves to define us and shape our lives? So compelling is its influence, that memory can determine expectations about the present, shaping our beliefs about ourselves and the world we inhabit. By extension, memory gives us certain habits of perception. With that, each person's unique modes of perception lead to equally unique processes of memory creation. Let's consider a scenario inspired by the work of Daniel H. Peck, specifically, his 1990 book *Thoreau's Morning Work*. Peck's insights inspired me to investigate this subject and produce a few digressions, which I share here.

Nothing could be more evasive than the realm of memory. Think about it. If two people meet for coffee and discussion, posterity will have two very different versions of the event. To some degree, personal history will play a role. If one person is an artist, she may easily recall the time of day and the light it offered, creating her own picture of the clamorous café. Perhaps her companion is a skilled mathematician who pondered the price of coffee and theorized about brewing processes. In any event, the way in which a person builds memories—whether emphasizing visual or auditory aspects, pleasant sensations or annoyances—is too much an aspect of individuality to qualify and too abstract to quantify. If we asked both of our coffee drinkers to recall their meeting and write a short account of it, we would likely think they were commenting on two different outings. This occurrence is common when asking different people to recall the same event. Since the subject of recollection is quite complex, understanding it requires us to ask questions about the role of perception and consider the influence of time, as well.

As years pass, our coffee companions may well forget about each other as well as their outing. What was once a recollection of emotional substance and vivid images could be lost entirely, or simply deteriorate into a hazy location devoid of color and character. In this way, memories become remnants

of imagination, a mere depiction of what took place. Now, consider what each person perceived.

As our coffee companions were chatting about the day, they were both hearing and seeing each other in different ways. Perhaps some words were lost or misunderstood in the din of a busy café. Perhaps one person was delighted and engaged and the other a bit bored by the whole thing. In any event, their modes and levels of perception were probably very different. And this is important to understand; among other things, it means that their methods of creating and retaining memories, in general, are also very different. Perhaps the artist has trained her eye to be attentive to color and form, while the mathematician has become attuned to quantity and technical processes. In short, both people have trained and sharpened their perception in different ways, each individual tending to notice different aspects of the same environment. Here, I would argue that a lifetime of remembering technical details of quantitative significance tends to create an objective habit of perception. In analogous fashion, our artist may perceive events more subjectively, according to her recollection of color and texture. In either case, we see that individual preferences give rise to the formation of certain memories, which, in turn, inform the process of creating future recollections. Now, consider how this pertains to a simple outing, perhaps a walk in the park, for instance. What can this idea about memory creation tell us about our own experiences of the day?

Just as our two hypothetical coffee companions used their perception to create memories, we do the same as we stroll through the park on a lovely afternoon. Consider how you tend to perceive your environment. Do you notice how colors shift and change according to the time of day? Do you tend to notice rapid changes in temperature and humidity? According to what you perceive most readily, you are determining how your memories will form over time. Over the years, you may tend to recall the scorching heat of the desert, while others remember the same terrain for its color and depth. In short, perception and memory help to define our understanding of life, giving us a broader scope of enjoyment whether strolling through a lush, green park or experiencing the noise and fragrance of a crowded café. On your next outing, consider how you see the environment. What kinds of details do you tend to remember? Keep a journal of your park visits to understand how your memory works.

Allison M. Palmer

Urban Flora & Fauna *Special*



*Our food
comes to us by way
of a complex
and delicate system.*

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Further Reading:

"Food Web: Concept and Applications" (Find this article on the *Nature Journal* website, under the heading for the Knowledge Project).

Natural History

Understanding the Food Pyramid

Study of the environment reveals that we are part of a complex, far-reaching system of interdependence. Questions about this condition persist and give rise to ongoing research and debate. However, in order to approach these subjects, and understand what is being discussed, we need a bit of background. So, let's start by examining some basic concepts of ecology, beginning with ecosystems and continuing with a study of the food web that sustains life on earth.

When you envision an ecosystem, what images come readily to mind? Perhaps you see a verdant landscape complete with deciduous trees and foraging animals; every aspect of the picture is brimming with life and activity. There is, however, a good deal more to consider, because an ecosystem is comprised of both living and nonliving elements. In his book, *A Natural History of California*, Allan Schoenherr calls an ecosystem "an interacting unit in nature" (pg. 18). He goes on to illustrate the role played by producers, consumers, light, heat, water, soil and gases. Each component plays an essential part.

Now, with this synopsis, we have a basic picture of how things work; nature can be perceived as a set of interacting units, the members of which can either be living or nonliving. Our initial conception of an ecosystem has been expanded to include the physical components as well as the processes they undergo. Life thrives on a cycle of regeneration. "... organisms are in a balance with nature, and they do not use up their resources" (ibid.). Schoenherr illustrates this clearly. As we will see, the ideal condition of

natural components is dynamic, a continuous activity of decay and renewal.

We now know how complex and diversified an ecosystem is with its living and nonliving members. Now, let's take a look at the food relationships it incorporates. "A food chain is the sequence by which energy is transferred from sunlight, to green plant, to herbivore, to carnivore" (Schoenherr, pg. 23). If we wish to create a diagram of these connections, it will resemble a hierarchical structure, a pyramid with vegetation (depicted at the base) supporting a layer of herbivores who, in turn, feed carnivores. But keep in mind that the process of depicting the pyramid involves a number of important considerations; if you count the number of plants you see in the forest, that amount will exceed the number of herbivores that are present. And the carnivores who, in turn, eat these animals will be fewest in number and therefore be located at the top of the pyramid. It makes sense that consumers must never outnumber their food source.

The matter of which animals eat from specific areas of the food pyramid brings us to the subject of food webs. As we begin to look at this in a bit more detail, keep in mind that energy is the main consideration.

Schoenherr simplifies the first two laws of thermodynamics for us. (1) The amount of energy in the universe never changes. It is constant. (2) Energy can change form, but the transfer is not efficient. Entropy, or disorder, results when a transfer takes place. Putting things back in order requires additional energy to be utilized. In short, energy transfers within ecosystems are inherently inefficient for this reason (pg. 22).

Now, getting back to our food pyramid example, we must remember that the number of species at any given level cannot have a biomass greater than what the laws of thermodynamics will allow. In other words, the relationship between the species eating and the ones *being* eaten is governed by immutable laws. For this reason, things can become fairly complex. The amount of energy remains the same, so the interaction of plants and animals will change to conform to the laws of thermodynamics. In a food web, we see a depiction of this. In graphic form, it will show the degree to which numerous food chains weave together as they conform to the laws of science.

The next time you eat from your garden, or enjoy a burger, take a moment to consider your connection to food. We are part of a complex relationship of consumption that supports life on our planet.

Allison M. Palmer

Chollas Flora & Fauna *Special*



*The Art
of walking
is celebrated
most joyfully
by writing
about one's
journeys.*

To Take a Walk

A Few Reflections

Allison M. Palmer

The next time you stroll the grounds of your local park, or walk the tree-lined streets of your neighborhood, take a moment to consider the many aspects of walking. For those who labor in sedentary professions, it offers the refreshment of exercise. However, thanks to the ancients, there is also a tradition of thought and introspection associated with the activity of walking.

In the modern age, walking is often a planned activity; it requires an allocation of time which proves challenging to our busy schedules. Once, however, walking was more closely associated with merely wandering and practicing certain methods of philosophy. In that spirit, Aristotle founded a school of philosophy at the Lyceum around 335 BC. He was known for walking while he addressed his students. For this reason, those who studied with him became known as the *Peripatetics*, a term derived from the Greek word for walking. Members of the Lyceum studied everything from logic and metaphysics to language and the rhetorical arts, as they toured the countryside with Aristotle (*The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* pgs. 38-42).

Philosophy has an ancient association with the prosaic activity of walking. The two work well together. In fact, we can see another example

of this connection if we begin to view walking as an artform in and of itself, physical exercise that invites one to ponder and create. The world's most brilliant thinkers—Einstein and Gödel among them—enjoyed long walks to aid their intellectual endeavors.

Over the centuries, a number of contemplative traditions have embraced the activity of walking. Today, we take it for granted that a walk around the neighborhood will refresh us for the remainder of the day. However, there was at least one cantankerous essayist who took issue with such wisdom. His name was Max Beerbohm or, as George Bernard Shaw called him, “the incomparable Max.”

For Beerbohm, there was no point in leaving the warm surroundings of his study for a swing “along the high road and over dale.” In his estimation, the brain is never more idle than when the body goes out for a walk. “The brain (wraps) itself up in its own convolutions, and falls into a dreamless slumber from which nothing can rouse it till the body has been safely deposited indoors again” (“Going Out for a Walk”). This conception brings a question to mind; really, what is the point of taking a walk?

Anyone who sits at work for a large portion of the day will answer this question with ease; there is nothing more liberating than going outdoors for a lunchtime stroll. Beyond that, however, if we consider the opportunity for thought and discussion, time spent walking takes on a new dimension of value. For the students of Aristotle, instruction went hand-in-hand with strolling through the countryside. When we walk with companions, we claim a few moments from the day in which to converse and explore ideas, a wonderful way to solve problems and spark creativity. Although Beerbohm disliked allowing the brain any relaxation, most people of the modern world cherish the respite.

The next time you enjoy the splendid pleasures of a walk, remember how the ancients used this activity to further their understanding of the world and enliven their minds.

Special
Literature Issue



Sir Gawain

speaks

to the mythic past

while reminding us of

universal aspects of life.

Works Cited:

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Urban Flora & Fauna Essays

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

To the present day, the author of this beloved Arthurian poem remains unknown. The basic plot, however, is one of enduring familiarity to our culture; a knight of King Arthur is called to leave the safety of court to accept a stranger's challenge. From there, the narrative moves from familiar themes of chivalry to ideas about the environment. So, for the latter reason, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is an interesting book for us to examine.

Written around 1400, and discovered during the reign of Queen Victoria, the work presents a number of challenges for skilled translators, the most recent of whom is the poet Simon Armitage. He is rather unique in his treatment of this Middle English poem, emphasizing the great alliterative qualities of the text, which, in his assessment, serve to weave the narrative together. Other translators have struggled in this area. (Simon Armitage, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* pg. 12). So, what is it that truly establishes this poem as a great piece of literature? Perhaps it has to do with the romance of mythic history as much as the poet's sophisticated use of rhyme and meter.

Many scholars locate the historical King Arthur in the ninth century, depicting him in leather rather than the shining armor of courtly romance. Tales written during the Age of Empire—when Victorian England wished to wrap itself in the legitimacy of a mythic past—are the ones with which we are most familiar. Consequently, Sir Gawain's adventures with the Green Knight strike a chord with modern readers. However, unlike the cloying writers of courtly romance, the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* seems to delight in his tongue-in-cheek rendering of knights adrift in a world of courtly

virtue. The poet of this romance was, most likely, a person of the world who realized the absurdity of court life and wished to poke fun at it. To accomplish this feat, not only did he (or she) employ the complexities of the bob and wheel format, but the poet also contrasted formal themes with colloquial terms and interludes of innuendo (Armitage, pg. 15).

The story begins at Christmas, as the knights of King Arthur's court are gathering to feast, play games and regale each other with tales of bravery. This image is deftly contrasted to the historical backdrop the author provides; he describes a time during which the siege of Troy has left its mark of destruction. This is the period of war and strife which Arthurian lore claims as its legacy, a situation ripe for satire. With this in mind, the poet introduces an invader into the esteemed court of King Arthur to stir things up a bit.

The Green Knight, apparently based on the mythic Celtic Green Man, is at once a generative force of nature as well as an agent of destruction. While the knights are engaged with their telling of tales and holiday feasting, the green figure bursts into the castle and issues a gruesome challenge.

In a spirit of defiance, he offers up a great battle axe and demands to be decapitated by one of the knights. Knowing that someone must accept the challenge, in order to protect the court's honor, Gawain takes the weapon in hand and commits the deed. Only, unbeknownst to the young man, the Green Knight will live and expect to repay the challenger with a similar blow in one year's time. And, with that, an adventure begins, taking young Gawain from the safety of court life to the dark forest where danger and hunger await him; he must find the Chapel of the Green Knight and meet his destiny. And this new realm will be nothing like Arthur's castle. "The clouds which had climbed now cooled and dropped/so the moors and the mountains were/muzzy with mist . . ." (Armitage pg. 159). Gawain must now enter a wild, forbidding land.

Above all else, this story offers an interesting image of nature. Emerging from a warm, safe castle, a young knight must prove himself in the dark regions of the forest, his symbolic initiation into adulthood and the true life of a warrior. His destiny is to meet the Green Knight, an anthropomorphic manifestation of nature with verdant locks and legs like the trunks of towering trees.

Allison M. Palmer



Urban Flora & Fauna Special

The Story of Fire

Nature's most destructive expression is also one of its most generative. In this issue, we will examine fire for its ferocity, strength and subtle beauty. The subject is vast, and we can approach it from a number of angles, not the least of which involves historical perspective. So, in order to embrace this range of ideas, we will begin with a story, a brief look at how the London fire of 1666 re-shaped an entire society, and conclude with a basic look at the science behind the heat and color of fire.

There is no doubt that fire has the power to change things on a dramatic level, to lay waste to all that stands before it. However, through the destruction, comes the emergence of new life; seeds are heated and broken as flames engulf the landscape. Indeed, the spring that follows a forest fire is rich in seedling growth, hints of green emerging from newly refreshed earth. By way of its destruction, fire brings order and commands natural processes. And, as we will see, an exercise of this power came to the city of London in 1666.

Stuart England experienced its share of misery. In 1665, the scourge of medieval life—the plague—sent the inhabitants of London into outlying areas in search of safety. In 1666, by happenstance, a maid of the royal baker neglected to extinguish her oven fires one night. The wooden home of Thomas Farriner, the baker, burned and propelled his name into English history. It began as a house fire, but the season was ripe; September wind brought flames to the point of conflagration, consuming every structure in sight, laying waste to all of London. Fortunately, however, most of the city's inhabitants found safety in the countryside (*The History Learning Site/UK*). What good came of the fire?

Over the centuries, history has judged this event to be somewhat fortuitous; the filth of London had been host to a number of plague-bearing rodents. After flame and ember subsided, a

renewal of the urban landscape began.

The process was dramatic and complex.

Suffice it to say that the remnants of a squalid medieval city were swept away, as the Early Modern age emerged. Now, let's examine this incredible event in light of its chemical processes.

Quite simply, the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines fire as "a rapid, persistent chemical change that releases heat and light and is accompanied by flame, especially the exothermic oxidation of a combustible substance." The key to understanding its power is to note that, unlike the process of rusting, the oxidation associated with fire is very fast and releases a considerable amount of heat and light, depending upon its sources of fuel. This process is clarified by a model known as "The Fire Tetrahedron." At the base is the "chain reaction," the impetus behind expansion. At the center is heat, while oxygen and fuel form the sides of the model. If any one of these elements is removed, or changes drastically in quantity relative to the others, the fire will not be sustained. So, keep in mind that flames reveal a stable set of chemical processes, the power of which is undeniable.

Clearly, fire has left its mark on the stage of human history. It changes the landscape and the built environment without mercy. However, in so doing, it allows for new growth to emerge. Indeed, fire has shaped our world. Also of interest are the ideas that flames convey; clarity of mind and strength of spirit are evoked by the image of fire. Nothing dull or simpering was ever mentioned in reference to the magnitude of flames.

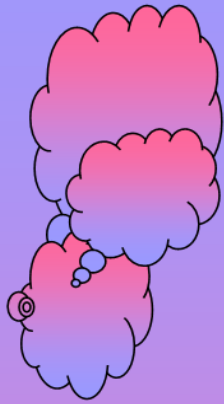
There are many useful books on fire science. *Introduction to Fire Science and Fire Protection*, by William K. Bare, is a wonderful place to begin. As for the subject of history, there are numerous fascinating books about the London fire of 1666. You may enjoy *The Dreadful Judgment: The True Story of the Great Fire of London, 1666* by Neil Hanson. These books can be found in the University of California Library catalog as well as your local public library. Enjoy your studies!

Allison M. Palmer

Fire

changes
the landscape
and the built environment
without mercy

Urban Flora & Fauna Essays



*Candy floss
is part
of
our cultural
memory*



The Story of Cotton Candy

Upon learning that the new issue of *Chollas Essays* would have to do with cotton candy, one of my colleagues responded with a grunt and a rather lengthy growl. What in the world could possibly connect spun sugar to the magnitude and glory of nature? Aside from a detailed study of the farming of sugar cane, very little, unless one considers the subject of association. In short, cotton candy can be linked to our sense of summer and the enjoyment of parkland, that sweet reminiscence of childhood and days of innocence. So, let's take a look at the history of this beloved treat, and consider how it reminds us of summer fun in the park.

The bag contains a puffy bit of pink and blue confection. Soft enough to resemble an amorphous stuffed toy, it seems astoundingly inedible, like a pillow or a plaything miscast as candy. However, much to a child's delight, the bag can be torn open and the soft contents eaten, creating a true experience of summer fun. The "cotton" soon begins to melt into sticky globs of sweetness, gracing both fingers and teeth with a compelling dose of sugar, a truly cloying snack. Nonetheless, cotton candy can at least boast of its simplicity. In an age when toys emit electronic voices, and computer screens assist imagination, the iconic treat promises a trip down memory lane, sticky hands and all. And, in addition to being a source of fun, this odd confection can be profitable, as well.

One of the most obvious benefits of creating a simple treat has to do with ingredients. Cane sugar and a bit of food coloring provide you with the basics, and a simple manufacturing process finishes the job, at which point you have a colorful, highly appealing product ready for market. By some accounts, credit for invention goes to four men. In 1899, Thomas Patton, Josef Delarose Lascaux, John C. Wharton and William Morrison developed a process for making "Fairy Floss," and, in so doing, defined the culture of circuses and fairs for generations of children (*Cotton Candy Express* homepage). However, the history of this confection goes a bit deeper than most realize.

In Italy, as early as the fifteenth century, it was

common knowledge that sugar could be melted in pans and pulled over upside down bowls to create "spun sugar" desserts. The same methods could be employed to create a variety of intricate confectionary decorations. Although inventive, and popular for a number of centuries, this process was too complex for the demands of mass production. It fell to the four inventors of the late nineteenth century to industrialize the process.

As for the technology, it remains essentially unchanged. Centrifugal force is used to spin the melted sugar and pass it through the holes of a screen. Then, the candy is collected in a pan and eventually wound on paper cones and packaged. After that, it becomes an emblem of carnival fun, periodically interrupting our information culture with quaint swirls of pink and blue sugar. However, the most fascinating aspect of this confection has to do with how its history has been documented, or, as the case may be, lost to the uncertainty of lore.

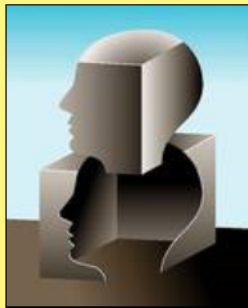
Perhaps it had to do with the unquestioned frivolity of the subject, but no one cared to recall exactly who had patented the first cotton candy machine, or developed the business model that made it an icon of childhood. For this reason, there are as many accounts of its creation as one may care to know. That issue aside, it is amazing that something so simple became a staple of our cultural memory. Taste has a great deal to do with it.

The overbearing sweetness of candy, favored by children of all ages, is very powerful yet simple to the senses. Even when hampered by a cold or seasonal allergies, the human tongue can generally detect saltiness, or the sharp edge attending sweet and sour foods. Perhaps this is why cotton candy has figured so prominently in our culinary history, with its pungent sweetness. Whatever the case, this confection will always be associated with the fun and ease of summer days, as pleasing to the eye as it is to the taste buds.

If you would like to learn more about the general history of candy making, you may enjoy *Sugar-plums and Sherbert: The Prehistory of Sweets* by Laura Mason. From time immemorial, confections have been a source of delight.

A. M. Palmer

Chollas Flora & Fauna Essays



How can philosophy help us to examine and understand our environment?

Further Reading:

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Philosophy & Nature

What is philosophy and how does it pertain to nature? In this issue, we will explore some ideas about the definition of this subject and see how it relates to the world of our experiences. We will undertake this task with the aid of Isaiah Berlin, Andrew Feenberg and Richard Rorty, three philosophers whose work has greatly informed the discipline.

The practice of philosophy is central to human experience. Now, in order to understand it more fully, we will consider the work of Isaiah Berlin. In "The Purpose of Philosophy," he tells us that subjects of study can be understood by the kinds of questions they were invented to answer. So, in order to fathom the definition of philosophy, we can begin by asking about the various subjects it was created to address. According to Berlin, some regard philosophy as the "contemplation of all time and existence." For the moment, we can focus on existence rather than time. Here, we consider the issue of what divides human endeavor from the natural world. How have philosophers approached questions about existence and the extent to which nature and the built environment diverge?

This question points us in an interesting direction. Andrew Feenberg reminds us that the Greeks understood nature to be that which gives rise to itself and exists of its own volition. So, *physis*, generally translated as nature, is distinct from *poiesis* which pertains to the human activity of making things (*Heidegger and Marcuse*, pg. 6). Keep in mind that nature, for our purposes, can include tangible elements such as leaves and rocks. However, it also relates to things which cannot be seen, like the intricacies of instinctive behavior. Neither realm originates with human volition; in other words, these things exist, and we did not make them. However, we can act upon natural things and change their existence, their condition. Here, the subject becomes complex, and challenges the limits of our understanding—on a significant level.

To study this issue, we have the aid of *epistemology*, the branch of philosophy that determines the nature and limits of human knowledge. The study of existence is called *ontology*. These branches of philosophy were established to answer questions about the general nature of knowledge and existence.

Now we have a basic idea about the relationship of philosophy to nature. The Western tradition draws a clear distinction between *physis* and *poiesis*, the realm of nature and the activity of human agency. With this in mind, we can go a bit further and consider a concept provided by Richard Rorty.

How are human intentions, which cannot be seen, related to the events and actions to which they give rise? In other words, what is the relationship between the unseen and that which can be observed? Rorty said that in order to associate intentions with other aspects of the immaterial—such as thoughts, ideas and notions of meaning—we must identify intentions with that which is phenomenal. In my assessment, visible events offer insight into the connection between intentions and the immaterial aspects with which they can be associated (Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pg. 31). Now, what does this have to do with nature? In order to answer this question, we can look back to Andrew Feenberg.

The philosopher's task is to contemplate things like time and existence, to fathom the unseen origins of the visible world. With this in mind, we can learn to observe the subtle differences between *physis* and *poiesis* by connecting *intentions* to the phenomena they create, and deciding just how far their influence extends. For example, consider a tree. It exists, in its essence, beyond human volition, although its location and survival can depend entirely upon our unseen intentions and the tangible, measurable actions we inflict upon it. In this way, we can study invisible intentions according to the visible phenomena they create. Is the tree damaged by our actions or helped by them? Things become complicated when we do not know if our chosen actions will indeed reflect our intentions. This is where experimentation and observation come into play.

Suffice it to say that we can examine the landscape—be it urban, suburban or wild—and ascertain something about the intentions of those who have acted upon it over the years. By doing this, we will begin to learn something about the distinction between *physis* (nature) and *poiesis* (the human activity of making things). What can our intentions influence? What is beyond our ability to control? Much remains to be discovered. Enjoy your journey!

Allison M. Palmer



Chollas Flora & Fauna *Special*

Architecture and Organic Forms



The shapes of nature are rich and varied. For countless years, they have informed our building practices, providing a sense of the organic in homes, places of work and spaces devoted to worship. This week, let's examine the organic forms of architecture created by Frank Gehry and Marcos Novak, two world-renowned designers. While Gehry is known primarily for his built work, Novak is acclaimed for his wealth of theoretical projects. Throughout their careers, both architects have utilized organic forms to redefine our experience of space.

Most of us know Gehry for his design of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain and the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. However, a lesser-known example of his style can be found in Germany. The conference center of DG Bank in Berlin is a focal point of atrium skylights and flowing, sculptured walls. Within this space, occupants have a sense of living within an organism rather than laboring in the shadows of wood and metal. The design is fluid and reminiscent of motion. If you examine the walls, you will find that they have the texture of foliage and appear to glow with sunlight.

Gehry depicted various shapes of life with his design of DG Bank, and the forms are compelling. However, if we want to examine something a bit more cutting-edge, the work of Marcos Novak is a great place to begin.

Imagine a textured surface. Now, imagine that the surface in question is metallic and comprised of numerous folds, almost like a crumpled piece

of paper. Holes are everywhere, leading from one layer to the next, giving you the sensation of finding the center of things only to be pushed into another chamber. You are deep within *AlloBio*, a computer model of an organic/metallic structure that is likely to remain in the realm of theory. In this piece, as well as myriad others, Novak combines the shapes and textures of nature with metal alloys. His computer models presage a world wherein the organic forms of Gehry are taken a step further; the complex designs resemble alien life forms more than architectural renderings. If *AlloBio* were to become a dwelling, occupants would likely wonder if they could escape its labyrinthine metallic walls. In this event, the outdoors would offer a merciful reprieve.

The designs of Frank Gehry and Marcos Novak remind us that our homes and workplaces are a part of the natural world. Whether they resemble bodies of water, or the interior of a strange animal, the projects of these architects convey the grace of nature. Yet, we must keep in mind that their work is influenced by a number of different fields.

According to Novak, his style can be compared to music. "(Liquid architecture) is a symphony of space, but a symphony that never repeats and continues to develop." This quote brings to mind the full range of his influences. From the shapes that appear to behave in organic fashion, to the idea of forms resonating in infinite space, Novak redefines our sense of habitation and the notion of "building."

To learn more about *liquid architecture*, the school of theory for which Marcos Novak is known, contact the Department of Architecture at the University of California, Los Angeles. For information on his *Laboratory for Immersive Virtual Environments*, contact the University of Texas at Austin.

Allison M. Palmer

Chollas Flora & Fauna *Special*



*The curve
is the elegant shape
of narrative.*

Organic Forms Aspects of Curvature

We can begin by saying that it gets quite complicated, this business of understanding curvature. It has a great deal to do with the language of numbers, as you can well imagine; the distinction between a straight line and the flowing shapes of a curve becomes remarkably detailed the closer one looks. However, our investigation is far more aesthetic than scientific. So, let us begin by reflecting on how a curve differs from the staunch regularity of a straight line, the former conveying, as it does, a sense of mystery.

Perhaps the greatest symbolic difference between a straight line and a curve has to do with the kind of separation being created; whereas the former tends to suggest tangible distinction—one thing entirely divided from another—the latter implies a sense of ambiguity. When curved lines are utilized to create division, a tenuous sense of unity prevails. Elegant forms flow together and diverge, hinting at silhouettes and shadows, offering the viewer a realm of uncertainty. This interaction of shapes has a narrative quality about it; the forms quicken and flow like a story. And, as we examine things more closely, we can see that curvature defines not only our imagination but the natural world as well.

A curved line implies change and movement, characteristics inherent within nature. Consider this the next time you examine a leaf or a curved blade of grass quivering in the breeze. The sense of an infinite variety of curves, moving freely with the elements, is one of reassurance. In the presence of flowing forms, one tends to feel calm and relaxed. Perhaps this is why architects and interior designers incorporate undulating shapes into their work. There are, however, more than aesthetic differences between straight and curved lines. Math is very much at the heart of things.

In short, mathematical treatments of curvature pertain to geometry, defined shapes and angles which can be measured and read within specific contexts. The degree to which a line or a plane diverges from being either flat or straight will determine the amount of curvature present. Of course, things become a great deal more complex the further we delve into the subject, but this is the basic idea. Now, from an aesthetic point of view,

we can think about how various aspects of curvature are utilized in art.

For this exercise, you can examine any drawing, painting or piece of sculpture possessed of flowing forms. One of my favorite pieces, *The Tube Train* by Cyril E. Power (1934), can be found in the online collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In this linocut, the artist creates a vision of reality defined by exaggerated curves, human and industrial forms bent to the stylistic renderings of caricature. We see the men and women of rush hour packed into the confined space of a commuter train. Their legs, depicted by painfully bent lines, reflect the disfiguring influences of modernity. The Art Deco motifs decorating the walls of the train are bent in similar fashion. Viewed along with the expressionless faces and uniformly curved newspapers held by each commuter, the elements of the “tube” exemplify a narrative use of shapes.

The curve of a line can convey a sense of openness and harmony, either within the expanse of nature or within the built environment. However, when utilized by a skilled artist, a line can also express the uncertainty of modern life in the machine age. So, as we have seen, a great deal can be conveyed with the form of a gently sloping curve. We have explored a few examples found in nature and art. Now, let us examine the role played by curved elements in architecture.

First, consider the beauty of an arch, the symbolic and literal threshold leading from one space into another. Aside from the functional aspect afforded by curvature, the shape also creates a sense of visual harmony. *The Arc de Triomphe* in Paris provides a wonderful example of this. The subtle elegance of the threshold creates a walkway through this massive sculpture, and offers a pleasing compositional element to the viewer, as well. Without it, *The Arc* would be nothing more than a decorated block. The poetry and functionality of this piece depend on curvature. Examine it from all sides and see the extent to which flowing lines establish its beauty.

For a modern example, explore the works of Frank Gehry. Perhaps one of his most compelling uses of curvature can be found in the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao. From the steel frame and titanium sheathing of the building’s exterior, to the treatment of volume within, the curve is used to wonderful effect. Museum visitors experience art within a space devoted to form as well as function, evidence of the architect’s brilliant vision.

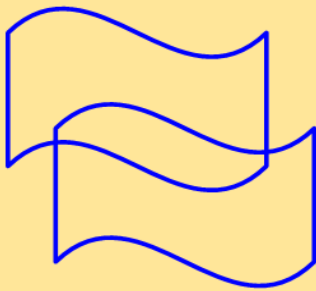
Consider the numerous shapes of our world; explore the realms of nature, art and the built environment with a discerning eye, and you will be amazed. You will see how aspects of curvature reveal beauty as well as functionality. Enjoy!

Allison M. Palmer

Urban Flora & Fauna Special



*These
Haunting Shades
of Green
have long inspired
poets*



Seamus Heaney

and

The Celtic Landscape

Places of beauty often conceal a sense of danger and potential, realms wherein strange things are commonplace and adventure awaits us at every turn. Over the centuries, Ireland has been just such a land, inspiring poets and thinkers of legendary prowess. This week, we will take a closer look at the Celtic landscape and the legacy it has bequeathed to the modern world.

Perhaps no poet embodies the culture more fully than Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney. Born in 1939, and raised by uncles after the early death of his parents, he learned a great deal about farming and cattle trading while growing up in County Derry (NobelPriz.org). His mind, never far from the strange contrasts of his home, became fertile ground for combining new perspectives with tradition. "Between my finger and my thumb/ The squat pen rests; snug as a gun./ Under my window, a clean rasping sound/ When the spade sinks into gravelly ground: My father, digging. I look down." These lines from "Digging" capture a sense of the landscape, a place of contrasts where sons follow a life of the mind and fathers continue to work the land, but there is a subtle twist we should note; the son holds his pen as if it were a gun, remaining poised and

prepared to come to his father's aid, if the need should arise. Heaney was a practical poet and a man of his time.

Some of his most celebrated poems are: "Death of a Naturalist," "Requiem for the Croppies," and "The Tollund Man in Springtime." Now, let us consider what this poet's work suggests about the world from which he came.

Above all else, one sees in the Celtic landscape a sense of grandeur and mystery, shades of green that form the countryside, hiding mysteries from ages past, and memorializing innumerable soldiers. "Of frog spawn that grew like clotted water" to where the "Terraced thousands died, shaking scythes at cannon," Heaney described the culture by crafting rich images. In short, he created an experience of place, time, and presence. "I loved the dark drop, the trapped sky, the smells/ Of waterweed, fungus and dank moss" ("Personal Helicon"). Never one to allow political extremists to corner him, Heaney remained a poet of visceral impact, who also understood the power of subtlety.

The National Library of Ireland will soon house the papers of Seamus Heaney. Scholars the world over are anxious to visit the library to make use of this "extraordinary addition" to the collection, a range of working papers that includes bound notebooks, loose-leaf pages and a wealth of research and insight from a great mind.

Seamus Heaney, considered the finest Irish poet since W.B. Yeats, will be missed by the literary and academic worlds. He passed away on August 30, 2013 in Dublin.



Allison M. Palmer

Dirt!



*Did you Know
That Silt Makes
Soil a Rich
Medium for
Plants?*

Chollas

Flora & Fauna *Special*

Ideas About the Environment

Soil and Life

Allison M. Palmer

The beauty of nature often consists in things which are less apparent to the eye. With that in mind, let's take some time to examine soil, the wealth of life that abides beneath our feet.

Anyone who has ever experienced the joys and frustrations of gardening knows the mystery of this medium. Soil either resists any attempt to grow our plants of choice or, if we are fortunate, blesses our efforts with abundance. It seems like a mystery. But soil, in its many varieties, either fosters or hinders growth for certain reasons.

To put things in perspective, we must consider the fact that more life is contained under the surface of soil than in the world above. In fact, most organisms live by way of soil's interaction with air and water. This is something we rarely give thought to as our feet make contact with the trail. But why do certain things grow more readily in certain kinds of soil? To answer this question, we must consider the subject of soil composition.

Find a garden where plants grow in wonderful profusion. Now, take a bit of soil and rub it on the palm of your hand. You should be able to feel the rough texture of broken rock and smell the remnants of decayed organic matter.

In addition, if the soil in question is near a mountain range, it will likely contain rich minerals deposited from rainfall. And, perhaps, you will notice that the soil in-hand has a bit of clay. If some of the particles feel like powder, and stick together when moist, clay is indeed present.

It is clear that a great deal can be discovered when soil is examined up close. Now, let's discuss a few well-known categories of this medium.

Although most soil has a variety of components, there are specific categories. Sandy soil is formed when rocks such as granite, shale and limestone erode over time. It tends to drain profusely during the summer months leaving plants with too little water. Silty soil, however, has more nutrients and drains more moderately, so vegetation tends to thrive in this medium.

As noted above, a great deal of soil contains clay. If this substance predominates, the lack of drainage makes it difficult for rain to penetrate. Many plants prefer balance, so loamy soil is often the most desirable. It contains a combination of sand, silt and clay and tends to drain quite well.

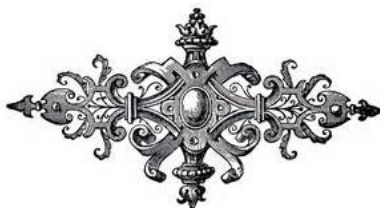
Depending on the kind of soil you have, certain plants will grow with ease and others will cease to thrive after only a short time. For more information, check with the U.S. Geological Survey or explore your local public library's section on gardening.

As you walk today, take a moment to feel the texture of the soil below your feet. Take it in-hand and examine it closely. More life is contained below its surface than in the air and water above.

Enjoy!

Folio Two

Photo Narrative





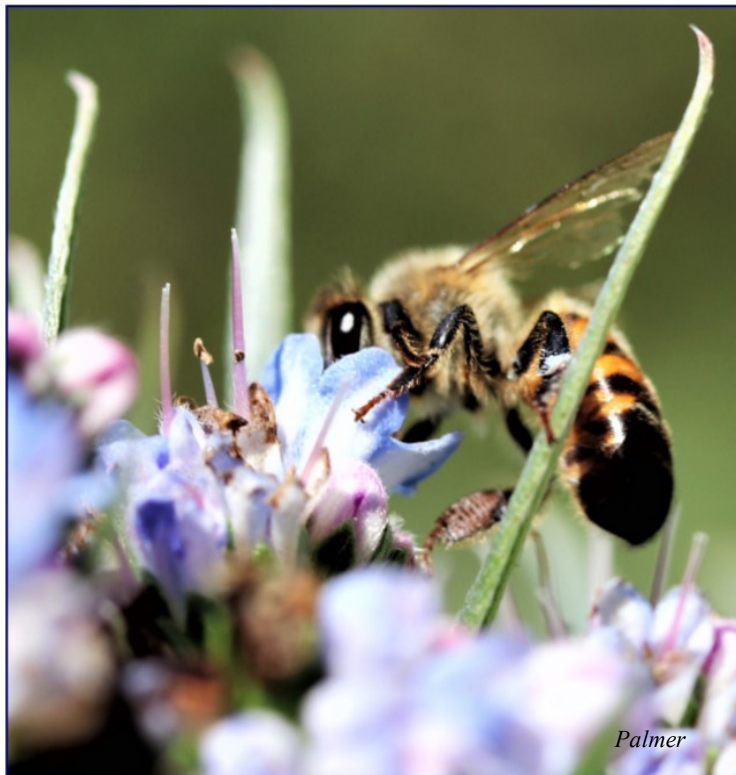




Palmer





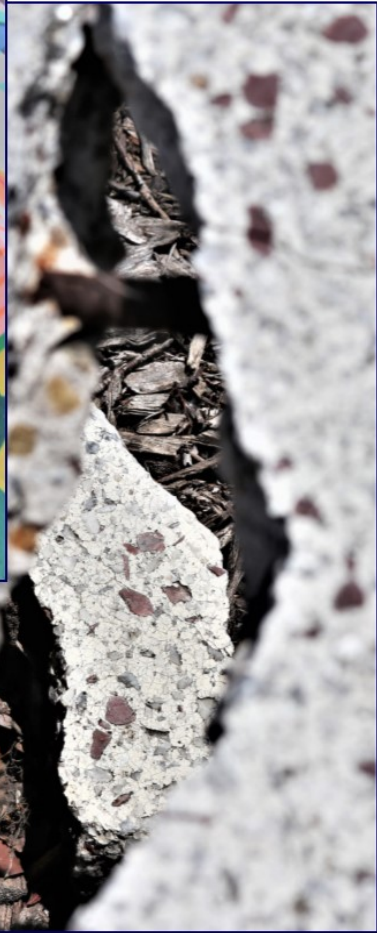








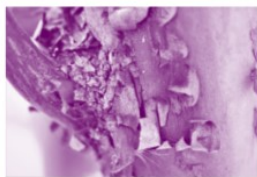
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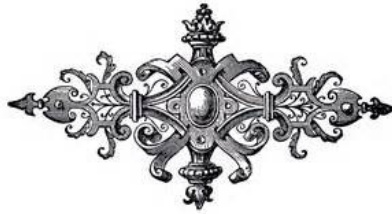
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Folio Three

Workshop Materials





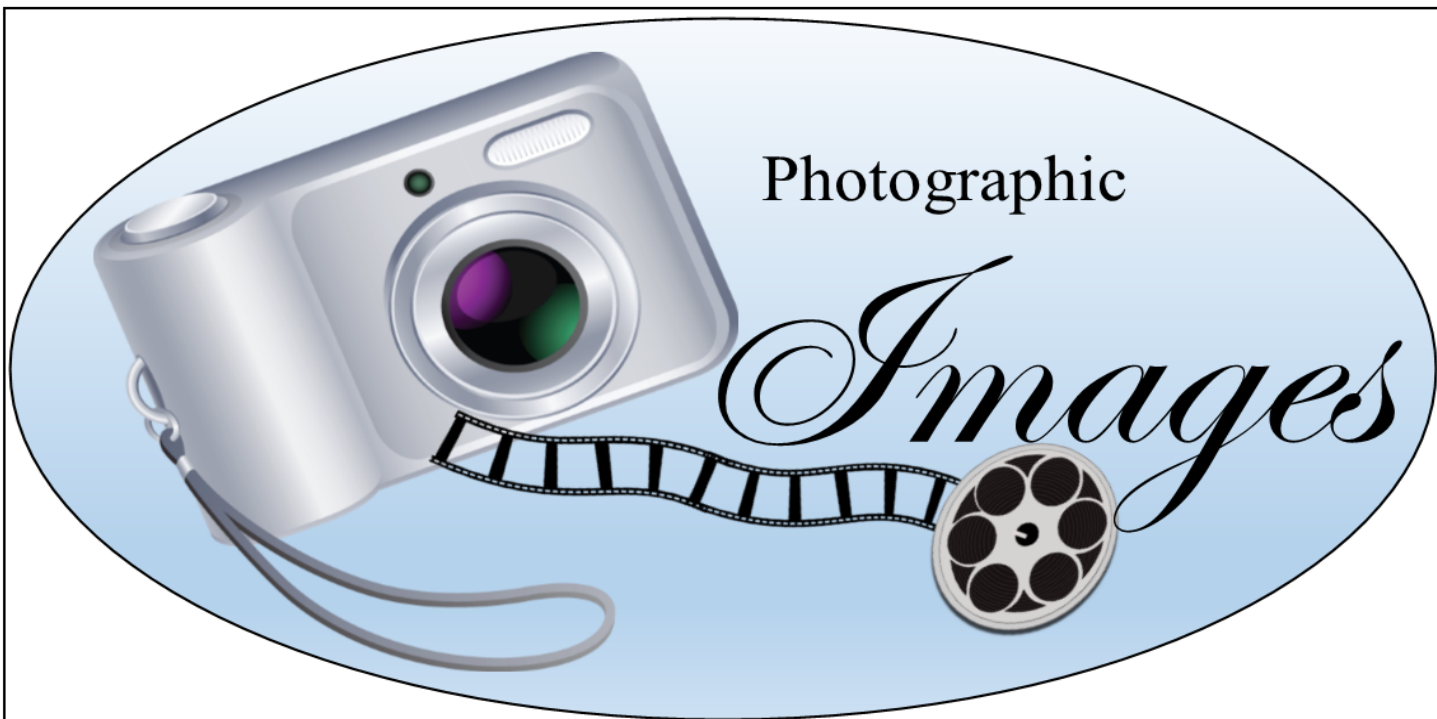
A Manual of Ideas

For the Photography Tour of

Chollas Lake Park

Park Ranger A. M. Palmer

Selecting Shots in the Park Environment



Technical Aspects of Photography

Perhaps you are ready to take the next step in producing photographic images, by leaping from the comfort and familiarity of your phone to the myriad features of a DSLR camera. If so, here are a few basic pieces of information to consider as you embark upon your journey.

Although the camera in your phone is more than suitable for many forms of photography, including images which you may wish to publish, the digital single-lens reflex camera will offer a great many additional features. Rather than using film, the DSLR employs a digital imaging sensor along with the optics of a single-lens reflex camera. In this design, the image makes its way to the viewfinder or image sensor by way of light moving through a lens and then to a mirror. The alternation of the mirror will determine whether the image goes to the viewfinder or image sensor. The single lens insures continuity of the image as it alternates between locations. From here, we consider the various shooting modes available on your camera.

You will find the mode selections on a dial marked: Auto, Av, Tv, P, M, more than likely. However, different

manufacturers use slightly different labels to represent the various shooting modes. The breakdown looks something like the following:

- **Aperture Priority (Av, or A)**
- **Shutter Priority (Tv or S)**
- **Program (P)**
- **Manual (M)**

The aperture is the opening of the lens that allows light to pass through, when the shutter is open. The larger the aperture, the more light passes through. The measurement is expressed in “f-stops.” (f/2.0, f/2.8, f/4.0, f/5.6). This is the ratio of focal length over the diameter of the opening. A wider opening (a larger aperture) has a smaller f number; a narrower opening (a smaller aperture) has a larger f number. Each time you reduce the aperture by a full f-stop, you reduce the amount of light passing through accordingly—going from f/2.0 to f/2.8, for example.

As you experiment with this feature, you will learn exactly how it changes the depth-of-field, the amount of an image that appears in focus. Aperture priority mode is semi-automatic. In similar fashion, shutter priority mode allows for a semi-automatic degree of control.

When you select shutter speed—the amount of time the shutter will remain open and allow light to pass through—the camera will determine the appropriate aperture. Although shutter speeds can be set for long periods of time, you will likely be dealing with seconds or fractions of a second for your measurements. It’s useful to remember

that a fast-moving subject requires a very fast shutter speed. In contrast, if you wish to allow for richer textures and variations of light, a long shutter speed will be necessary. In this instance, a tripod will be needed in order to keep the camera steady.

As you experiment with different subjects and light conditions, you may wish to go from controlling the aperture to controlling the shutter speed. In this event, program mode will allow you to choose which setting you wish to control manually. If you adjust the aperture, the camera will control the shutter speed, and so forth. After working with program mode for a while, you will be ready to take full control of your photography, controlling each exposure in manual mode.

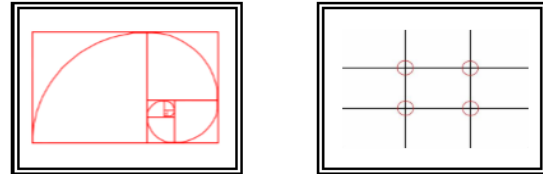
The main thing to keep in mind, as you work in manual mode, is the ISO measurement, a term which comes to us from the film era. In short, just as different film sensitivities are useful in certain situations, changing the sensor of your digital camera—in terms of how sensitive it is to light—is also very important. ISO 100 is the lowest setting, with ISO 6400 being the highest sensitivity. As you might expect, low light settings require higher ISO settings. However, the higher the setting, the more likely you are to introduce graininess into your image. For this reason, manual mode requires practice; you will enjoy the highest level of creative freedom, while exercising an equally high level of technical ability.

These are the basics of DSLR camera operation. As for the aesthetic side of things, there are no fewer options to consider.

Frame Composition

Photography is indeed an art form, requiring the utmost in aesthetic considerations, as well as technical understanding. To accomplish the former, in a satisfactory manner, we must understand how to compose a frame with balance and harmony, insuring that each element emerges according to a certain artistic design. If you photograph a car, for example, and intend to have it as the main focus of the frame, consider the angle from which to shoot it, and what forms will surround it. In this manner, you will establish a context for the main image. Contextualizing your piece is a way of drawing the viewer's eye to the points you wish to emphasize. Beyond this, you will wish to consider the interplay of light and shadow.

Good frame composition not only locates images and shapes effectively, it also demonstrates your ability to use light and shadow as forms, in and of themselves. As you begin to experiment with photography, take some time to view paintings and drawings. Study the way in which visual artists use different mediums to contextualize their subject matter. Now, consider the *Golden Mean*, what could be considered the ideal distribution of forms across a defined space, the “divine proportion.”



Beyond this, we also have “the rule of thirds,” an aesthetic principle that applies to art and design, as well as photography. Above, you see the way in which forms can be located within a frame, quite precisely, in order to maximize their aesthetic impact.

Finally, as you learn to use the various settings on your camera, and study the many theories of frame composition, remember what separates the photographer from painters: time. In our work, we have a fixed amount of time in which to choose our subject, develop a strong context for it, and choose the settings which will best allow us to achieve the desired depth-of-field and use of light. With all of these things in mind, go out and experiment with your images.





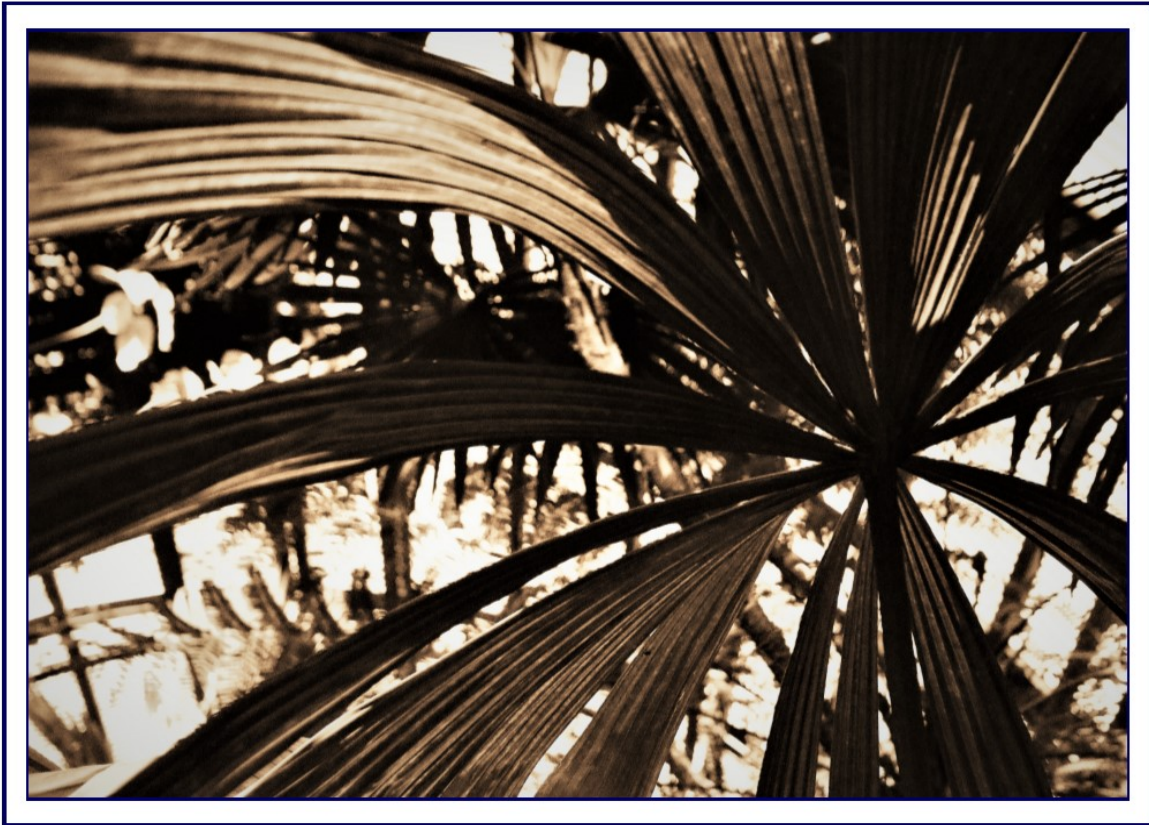
Macro Photography

As you begin to examine the natural world that surrounds you in the park, consider making use of a macro lens, in order to capture the vast detail of plants and rocks, or even the textures of old benches and the surfaces of buildings. Really, a dramatically magnified image can enhance the narrative quality of photos, pointing to the hidden and beautiful aspects of the park.

Unexpected Interludes of Beauty

Consider the odd angles and shadows cast by a dead tree. Although such elements of outdoor life are not always equated with beauty, they have a great deal to offer photographers and artists. A frame composed of sky, a soft horizon line, and the gray and brittle branches of a dead tree can create a tangible mood of drama and intrigue.





Texture and Image Repetition

As you begin to consider the various options you have for composition, bear in mind the relevance of texture, and the extent to which image repetition can convey your visual narrative. Above, we see an interplay of light and shadow overlaid by the leaves of a fan palm. The viewer's eye is directed towards the point at which they converge, hinting at the elements of the image that remain hidden in the background.

Falling Shadows

The drama of falling shadows can lend a sense of depth to your composition. Rather than relying on a high-contrast distinction between light and shadow, you can look for spaces where two elements are interspersed across the plane of the image. Try this experiment when afternoon shadows are distinct. After you study your frame, notice how each shadow creates a new element in your composition. Falling shadows create wonderful photo opportunities, transforming mundane elements into something dramatic.



For Further Study:

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Baird, George. *Public Space: Cultural / Political Theory, Street Photography*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom / SUN, 2011.

Bull, Stephen. *Photography*. New York, London: Routledge Press, 2010.

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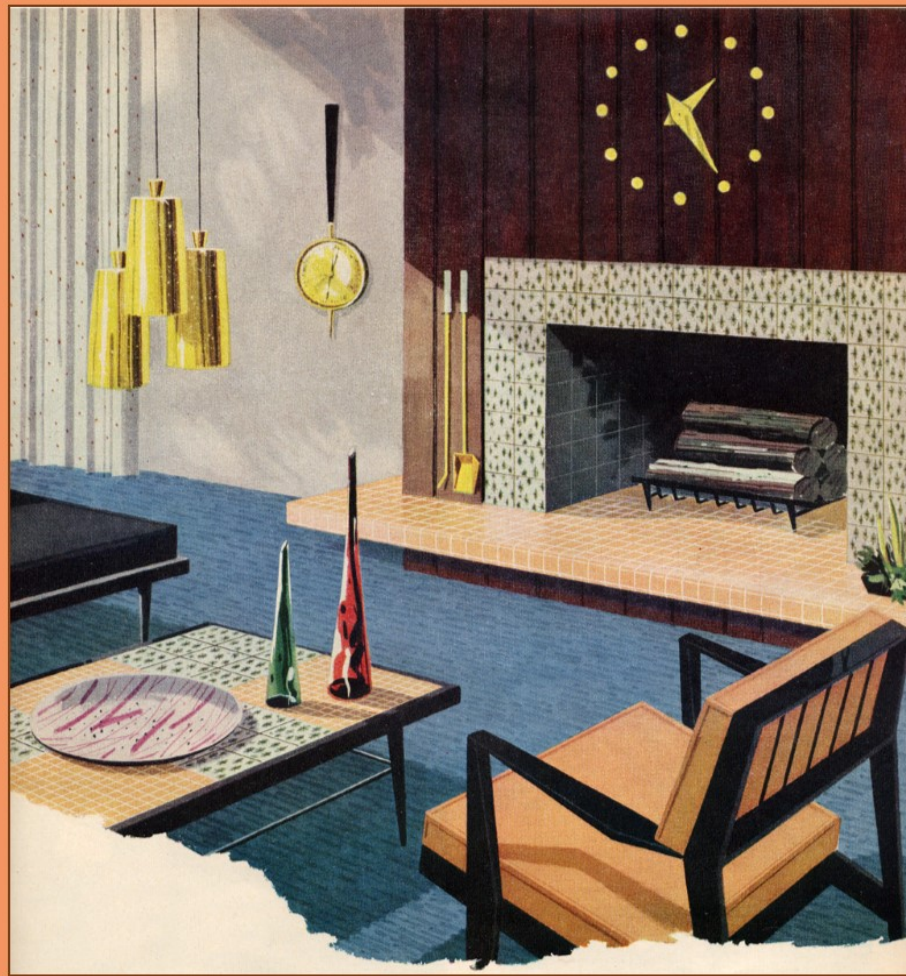
Rebekah Modrak, Bill Athens. *Reframing Photography: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge Press, 2011.

Hilde Van Gelder, Helen Westgeest. *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective: Case Studies from Contemporary Art*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

White, William. *Close-Up Photography*. Rochester: Kodak Publication, 1984.



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The Postwar Aesthetic

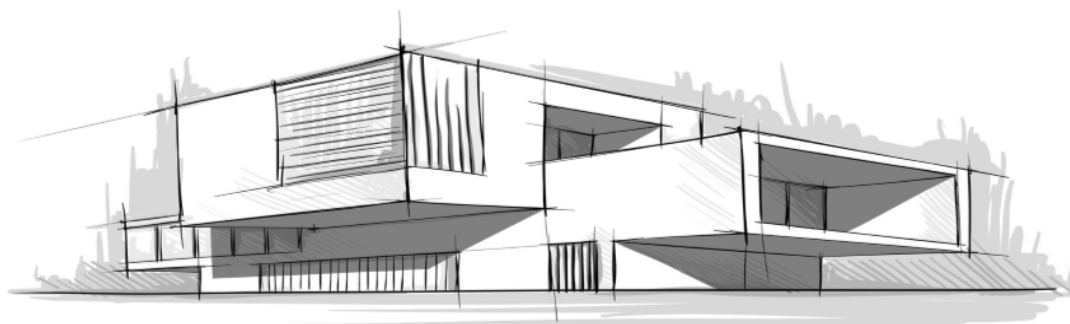
in Architecture and Writing

The Monthly Writing Workshop of Balboa Park #4

March 12, 2017

Park Ranger Allison M. Palmer

Writing Prompts:



Welcome to Recent History!

1) Imagine that you have just walked into the “Case Study Home” interior on page five. Yes, it’s 1960 all over again. The lady of the house discovers you standing in the hall of windows, gazing at her glorious swimming pool. She has not been expecting you and stares in shock in your direction. What happens next?

2) Imagine that you are a critic of architecture, and you have been hired to write a piece on the Seagram Building. Draft the first few lines of your essay. How would you introduce this building to your audience of design aficionados?

3) “Less is more.” Ludwig Mies van der Rohe received this maxim from one of his teachers. Although it applies to architecture and design, it has a certain relevance where writing is concerned. Does it apply to your writing? That is to say, do you express yourself better with a modicum of words or with long paragraphs and pages? Can you tell us the answer to this question in a few sentences?

4) Free write on the following topic: a long and sadly empty room in a house on a hill.

5) Turn to page four and take a few moments to examine the Farnsworth House, a design created by Mies. The Plano, Illinois greenery and flat landscape offer a stark contrast to the long white building with its many windows. Imagine that you are walking up the stairs on a sunny day. Just as you begin to appreciate the beauty of the interior, you notice that a man is blocking the entrance. I want you to tell us the story of what happens next.

Remember, as you complete these exercises, your readers will enjoy sensing, not only the mood of the era—the excitement of postwar optimism—but also your impressions of it. You are the critic, so tell us what *you* see.

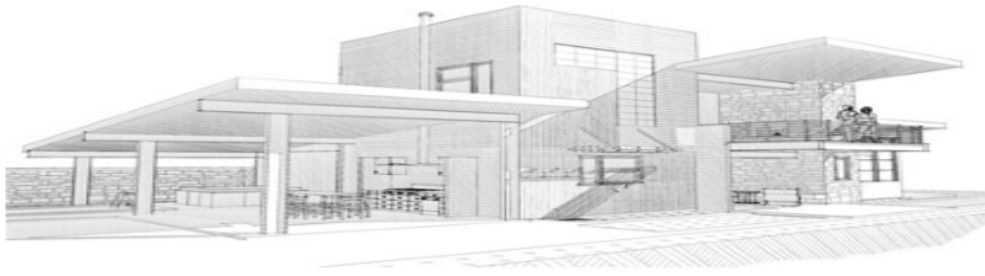
6) As we have seen, the structures of postwar life in America expressed joy and self-assurance, as servicemen returned to inhabit innovative homes and labor in progressive work environments. And yet, the writers and intellectuals of the era were beginning to warn of darker things; questions of equality and identity were casting shadows of doubt in this cheery new landscape of prosperity. For this prompt, imagine that it is 1962, and you have been invited to have coffee with Lorraine Hansberry and Truman Capote. You have just returned from a visit to the Farnsworth House and want to share the experience with them. What do you say to them? How do they react to you?

7) For this prompt, turn to page five and take a few moments to examine the Eames Chair, one of the most iconic furnishings of mid-century modern design. Imagine that you have been asked to write a paragraph about it for a local publication. It’s something of an experimental prose piece, so you are expected to do nothing more than describe it in great detail, everything from the shape to the color and the impact it has on the overall mood of the room. Dazzle us!

8) On page six, we see a long cement wall that reflects the style of mid-century Southern California. Note that the colors—worn by the stylish woman who leans against it—seem to capture the aesthetic of this era. Now, I want you to tell us who she is and why she happens to be sitting there.

9) On the same page, we see a beautiful interior from the period, complete with a shag carpet. While waiting for an appointment, you run your hands over the textured wall. Then you notice that several people have been watching you. What do you say?

10) If you grew up during this period, write a paragraph about the furnishings you recall from your childhood home. How did your parents embrace the postwar aesthetic?



From Architecture to the Written Word

Modernism is reactionary, a rallying cry—of sorts—calling for a changing of the guard, a transfer of power and influence from the prevailing standards of the day to something new and potentially exciting. As a consequence, a modernist stance is generally seen as being a bit crass or even vulgar, by traditionalists. Such was the case during the years just prior to World War I, when the Ecole des Beaux-Arts—with its emphasis on Renaissance forms and ornamentation—was taken to task by those who wanted something forward-looking, efficient and enjoyable, something *modern*. From that point on, the emphasis was on innovation. And by the early 1930s, the spare lines and open plans so indicative of mid-twentieth century buildings were beginning to appear, in defiance of naysayers. It was indeed a revolution. So, let's take a look at the mid-century modern movement—as it pertains to writing and architecture—and see what we can discover about this revolution in attitude and design.

Discussion Questions:

Is there a modernist building that comes to mind, as we discuss this topic? Can you describe it for us? Looking back, what do you remember most about it?

At roughly the midpoint of the twentieth century, great changes were underway, as the memory of the Great War gave way to the horrors of its successor, and questions about the future loomed in the popular imagination. With this in mind, we must regard the modernist movement as more than a shift in design theories, or an experiment in creating the ideal single-family home. It was an expression—conveyed beautifully through architecture—of hope and exuberance, an outburst of forced optimism, something of a necessity, all things considered; it diverted attention away from the horrific past and aimed it towards a hopeful if largely imaginative future. Now, as we consider the significance of new

architectural ideas—which formed the basis of the postwar built environment—let's think about their relationship to writing.

Discussion Questions:

Can you relate writing to architecture? Consider the following themes, derived from architecture, and relate them to the practice of creating prose and poetry:

- Light
- Mass and Void (space)
- Entryways
- Interlocking levels of space

Write a paragraph that expresses, in narrative form, some of the elements listed above. For example, write a few lines about light, or about space—great masses and voids. You can do the same for points of entry or interlocking levels of space. You can even go so far as to think about entryways as philosophical elements. Or, you might consider telling a story about interlocking rooms, each one leading to different levels of thought and experience. You can be as abstract and philosophical (or as direct) as you like. The point of the exercise is for you to tell us a wildly imaginative story using concepts and terms from architecture. Have fun with it!

As you continue to study the various design schools of historical architecture, remember to sketch and write about your impressions. No matter how rough or refined you choose to make your entries, the material of your observations will prove indispensable. You can include it in your memoirs, which will provide a rich palette of experiences to color the story of your life. In addition, you might consider writing a series of critical essays in a blog format. As a writer, you can expand all of your ideas, observations, and exercises into new projects. Keep this in mind as we continue with this workshop.

Writing about architecture can take a variety of forms, from criticism and the analysis of theory, to the crafting of fiction and personal observations. As essayists, we can take any of the ideas noted at the beginning of this text as a point of departure, from the inherent conflict between traditionalists and modernists to basic ideas about décor. The possibilities are vast. For the moment, however, let's focus on writing about our casual observations. If we examine page four, we will find some interesting photos of modernist buildings. What are your impressions of the black and white interior photo?

Perhaps one of the most characteristic features of the style has to do with minimalism; by way of open spaces, natural light, and limited decorations, designers created highly functional—even futuristic—environments. Also of interest is the fact that the line dividing interior and exterior spaces is often blurred in modernist buildings, initiating an interesting dialogue between the occupants of a building and the outdoors. And there is a story to be found in all of this. So, let's think about the *narrative* a building creates. How can we connect storytelling to our study of architecture?

Discussion Questions:

Let's think about the building we currently occupy, a former hospital which saw a great deal of use during the Second World War. What kind of a story does it tell? More specifically, what story does it tell you, as you sit here this morning? Write a few lines to answer this question. And as you do so, consider the details, the building's shade of pink, the cracked support beams out front, the lighting of the hallway, whatever captures your attention. Tell us what this place says to you and what it brings to mind.

The idea that a building can tell a story has a great deal to do with the purpose of a given structure, the basic reason for its creation. Indeed, there are practical aspects related to architecture that cannot be eclipsed by philosophy or flights of fanciful storytelling. And yet, if we stick with this theme of creating narratives, we can learn a great deal; our stories can enable us to develop our perceptions on a new level. With that in mind, I'd like to digress, momentarily, to reflect on the thoughts expressed by a young architect, undoubtedly influenced by the style we are now exploring.

In a recent lecture, Ole Scheeren challenged us to consider whether or not architecture "can be *about* collaboration and storytelling." He explained, to his London audience, that Louis Sullivan's maxim, "form ever follows function," relieved architecture of the burden of decorative arts at the expense of making it blandly utilitarian. In short, yes, great architecture *should* tell a story and rise above mere functionalism. But how can it do so? Visually. This is my opinion. But if the story is largely visual—having to do with a visually appealing environment—a question arises: how should a building *look*?

"A bank, traditionalists content with Beaux-Arts instructions would say, should look like a bank, which is to say, like a recognizable copy of an antique Roman structure—at least as imagined. In sharp contrast, a bank, innovative designers were beginning to say by mid-nineteenth century, should reject the habitual identifying marks and experiment with new shapes, untried materials, pleasing informal colors" (Peter Gay, *Modernism*, pg. 282).

By the middle of the twentieth century, the story of architecture was being told by elongated spaces, sparse interiors and smooth lines, a level of functionality achieved, not by way of bland utilitarianism, but according to a sympathy for materials, an eye towards innovation, and a desire to incorporate natural elements into the built environment.

Discussion Questions:

I'd like you to think about one of your favorite structures, anything from a monument or an historic house to a skyscraper. It could even be the house or apartment where you currently live. Describe it and relate how the *look* of the building impacts your feelings about it.

On page five, we see a few examples of what were called "Case Study Houses," a project developed for returning servicemen and their families. Could you live in one of them?

Architecture & Design

Elements

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

During the post-World War I phase of modernism, Mies created a style of elegance and simplicity, where vast horizontal spaces were contained within unadorned infrastructures. He made use of new materials, such as structural steel and plate glass, that allowed the famous *glass curtain walls* of the modernist corporate aesthetic to be constructed. Below, we see examples of how his work came to fruition from the mid 1940s forward.



The Farnsworth House



Interior

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The Seagram Building

From his conceptualization of orderly, modern home life to the corporate spaces he created, Mies defined his work not only by his use of materials but also according to an extreme orientation of spaces—both vertical and horizontal.

Case Study Houses & Furnishings (1945-1966)

In 1945, *Arts & Architecture* magazine sponsored a grand experiment in residential architecture, commissioning leading architects to design homes for the multitude of servicemen returning from the war. Focusing on efficiency and convenience, the many homes produced through this program defined the landscape of the Southern California suburbs.



Case Study Home Interior



Large windows and minimal landscape elements expressed the simplicity for which mid-century modern architecture is known and celebrated.



Even during the 1950s and 60s, the influence of Mies van der Rohe was significant. We see it clearly in this elongated structure that sits on a generously-sized lot. Later, as the 1970s progressed, and tract housing supplanted the case study designs, the emphasis would be on minimizing space and standardizing design elements. Artful minimalism then gave way to economic maximalists.



And who could forget the ubiquitous orange (or yellow) chair? Designed by Charles and Ray Eames, it remains a true expression of comfort and “futuristic” design.

Color & Texture

Perhaps more than even the use of space and copious amounts of filtered sunlight, color and texture define mid-century modern design. From the iconic perforated brick walls and color block paintings of the 1950s and 60s, to the glass curtains of East Coast skyscrapers, we see how the future looked and felt to the postwar world.



Although decorations are used sparingly in this style, color enjoys a place of privilege at mid-century, providing a counterpoint to minimalist compositions. A carefully designed interior could offer a spare, white room as a context for a large color field painting or a highly abstracted expression of the human form. The key to a successful decor, as always, had to do with balance and restraint. However, by the end of the 1960s, a restrained use of color had given way to explosive hues, eclipsing the elegant forms first developed during the early 1930s as a response to the Beaux-Arts style.

Because this style had so much to do with space (aesthetically and functionally), dividing rooms within buildings, or segmenting exterior areas artfully, often came down to the use of innovative walls. Here, we see how a perforated cement partition—composed of repeating geometric patterns—punctuates the sidewalk and surrounding greenery, creating a subtle and aesthetically pleasing division rather than a harsh barrier. The visual impact piques our curiosity and invites us to look behind the partition.

Without a doubt, the textured cement wall was a key component of the congenial, optimistic style of the mid-twentieth century, lending variety to long, smooth exterior walls and creating a bit of flair when necessary.





Lorraine Hansberry



Truman Capote

Writers of the 1950s & 60s

As architects were expressing postwar optimism, soothing us with bright, open spaces and their innovative use of natural elements, writers were moving in a very different direction. Lorraine Hansberry addressed issues of segregation and equality, both as a playwright and activist, prior to the civil rights movement, as Truman Capote developed narrative portraits of influential people. Eventually, he would destroy any hint of unqualified optimism with a work of experimental prose. *In Cold Blood* was indeed a counterpoint to cheerful interiors.



James Baldwin

At mid-century, James Baldwin—novelist and critic—addressed questions of sexual identity in eloquent fashion, also a bit of a contrast to the direction architects were taking in their work. He and Saul Bellow were both observant intellectuals of the age. Indeed, great currents of thought were moving through society, challenging postwar notions that the future would be simple and easy to comprehend.



Saul Bellow

The case study homes were devoted to making life more enjoyable and efficient for the families of that era. As we examine the photos, we can see how comfort and luxury were expressed by simple forms, incorporating large spaces and pleasant landscapes into rather ideal homes. We can also see how this aesthetic was expressed in home and office furnishings. Who could forget the Eames chair, a staple of mid-century modern decor? In short, the architecture and design movement of the mid-twentieth century was fresh, exuberantly optimistic, and elegant—on a deep level—a true expression of postwar prosperity and middle-class longings. Now, let's see how the built environment of this era can be viewed alongside the world of letters.

Writers of the 1950s and 60s

On page seven, we find photos of several writers of mid-century fame, each one innovative and emblematic of the period. Beginning with Lorraine Hansberry, an activist and award-winning playwright, we consider the subject of homelife. The private expression of public injustice was very much at the core of *A Raisin in the Sun*. In her play, Hansberry told the story of a family's struggle to navigate racial divisions and realize their dream of freedom, a sketch of her own life experience. And how does this pertain to our study of the mid-century attitude? Even from a cursory glance, it's easy to discern a contrast between the cheeriness of modernist architecture and the lives of those who had



limited access to a cheerful and bright future. And this brings us to a very important point.

The rhetoric of architecture often has a great deal to do with propaganda and idealism. In short, the utopian aspirations of a building, or a manifesto on theory, have the luxury of imposing conditions on the people who must live in the built environment, both in its physical and ideological forms. Now, with that in mind, let's digress, once again, to look beyond the content of Hansberry's work and focus, for a moment, on the form; the dialogue—a playwright's main vehicle—can be very useful for essayists to study.

Discussion Questions:

Can you recall one of your favorite plays? Do you enjoy reading scripts? I'd like you to take a moment to write a brief dialogue between two characters who have just met on a train. One of them has just visited the Guggenheim and is raving about the splendid architecture. The other character, in an attempt to force her companion back to a more pragmatic view of life, interjects with a bit of pessimism. For the sake of simplicity, we can name them Mary and Jane. Write about ten lines scripting their conversation.

Now, let's move on to think more directly about the essay genre, with the work of Truman Capote, one of the great innovators of mid-century thought.

Long, effusive descriptions are a hallmark of mid-century writing, offering a contrast to the unadorned architecture of the age. Truman Capote gave us an interesting balance between restrained elegance and vivid images. Let's examine a sample of his writing.

"At the garden's edge lay the marble shore of Lago di Garda, its waters swarming in the wind, and I knew then I would be always afraid to swim there, for, like distortions beyond the beauty of ivy-glass, Gothic creatures must move in depths of water so ominously clear" (Truman Capote, "To Europe").

This sentence, which is ornate and satisfying in its descriptions, is also a bit on the abstract side, leading the reader through a garden, a place of serene beauty, only to introduce disorientation—water observed through refractions of glass. Also of interest is the fact that the water is ominous in its clarity, as if threatening to reveal long-kept secrets. In this brief excerpt, we can see hints of the jazz-influenced, improvisational style developed by other writers of Capote's generation. In addition, we can sense, in his writing, a bit of the exuberance present in the architecture of the time. If Hansberry presented her audience with a postwar cautionary tale—a curtailment of optimism—Capote introduced the notion that new points of view might render what was once beautiful a bit ominous in the face of revelation. Now, let's see how this passage might relate to our own work.

Let's think about the narrative qualities of water and light for a moment, both of which present writers with a wonderful opportunity to craft rich descriptions.

Discussion Questions:

What kind of a brief narrative can you craft using water and light as your main descriptive elements? Write your first several sentences, and let's see where this theme takes us.

Next, we come to James Baldwin, also a writer who challenged postwar America to examine itself beyond the constraints of optimism. Although he explored themes of sexual identity in his work—the novel *Giovanni's Room* being a prime example—Baldwin was also an essayist and a social critic of broad appeal, one who explored universal aspects of human experience. Let's consider what he had to say about Shakespeare, the poet of prosaic life.

"The greatest poet in the English language found his poetry where poetry is found: in the lives of the people. He could have done this only through love — by knowing, which is not the same thing as understanding, that whatever was happening to anyone was happening to him. It is said that his time was easier than ours, but I doubt it — no time can be easy if one is living through it. I think it is simply that he walked his streets and saw them, and tried not to lie about what he saw:

his public streets and his private streets, which are always so mysteriously and inexorably connected; but he trusted that connection" (James Baldwin, "The Cross of Redemption").

When thinking about Baldwin, we realize that the realities of private life, and the messy aspects of being human, serve as an excellent counterpoint to the futuristic exuberance of the 1950s and 60s—so often expressed in the world of buildings. Indeed, there is a considerable distinction between the rhetoric of architecture and design and the writing of a novelist and social critic. Now, let's conclude this line of inquiry with a look at Saul Bellow, winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize in Literature.

"It was the peak of summer in the Berkshires. Herzog was alone in the big old house. Normally particular about food, he now ate Silvercup bread from the paper package, beans from the can, and American cheese. Now and then he picked raspberries in the overgrown garden, lifting up the thorny canes with absent-minded caution. As for sleep, he slept on a mattress without sheets — it was his abandoned marriage bed — or in the hammock, covered by his coat. Tall bearded grass and locust and maple seedlings surrounded him in the yard. When he opened his eyes in the night, the stars were near like spiritual bodies" (Saul Bellow, *Herzog*).

Here, we find a stark contrast to postwar congeniality in this lonely character, a man who finds himself adrift in a kind of dystopia, without the comfort of family life.

Those suburban homes do tell stories; in the splendid interiors of case study houses, or in the well-manicured yards of Chicago, more than a few messy human dramas unfolded during the height of mid-century modern influence.

Finally, it is enough to note that the architecture of the period, while elegant and hopeful, had an aura of fantasy about it, not simply in regard to futuristic themes and playful minimalist spaces, but mainly in relation to the reality of human life. However, we must always remember that the utopian aspects of architecture give the discipline its beauty and charm.

As you continue your writing journey, I hope you will take time to explore the themes and works we discussed here, in this very brief overview, on a deeper level. I hope you enjoy your adventure of reading and writing about life!

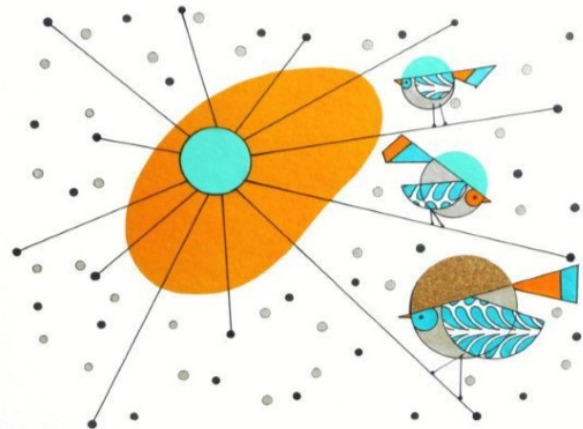
Allison M. Palmer



Concluding Prompts:

- 1) Free write on the following topic: the blue hipster with the martini glass and the sad-looking poodle.
- 2) Critic Robert Hughes said, in his essay on Andy Warhol, that "... the cultural moment of the mid-sixties favored a walking void." To what extent, if any, do you think the postwar aesthetic in architecture gave rise to complacency and what might be considered a certain form of artistic shallowness? Or, do you disagree with Hughes?
- 3) Again, we note that writers of the period were moving into areas once considered a bit taboo, or, at the very least, not worthy of extended examination and commentary. Looking back, we can say that they were giving the nation a nudge and a reminder that new frontiers would have to accommodate different ideas, different ethnicities, and new forms of prose. What are your thoughts here?
- 4) Mid-century modern design stands out, even as we make our way into the aesthetics of the new millennium. For this prompt, we are going to make use of the graphic in the lower right corner of this page, a true example of the style we are examining. I want you to tell us a story about it. We see three birds, in the presence of ... whatever that might be. What's going on with this picture?
- 5) This prompt will allow you to engage your ability to draw and visualize. Think back on everything we discussed during this workshop, the basic concepts of mid-century modern architecture and design, as well as the ideas of the writers we mentioned. Now, I want you to draw something that summarizes the subject. It could be a building, a person or an abstract concept. The most important part of the exercise is for you to transfer your written impressions into a visual format.

Drawing Exercises:



Suggested Reading:

Arnheim, Rudolph. *Visual Thinking*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2015.

James Baldwin. *Collected Essays*. New York: Library of America, 1998.

Bloom, Harold. *Truman Capote*. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2009.

Bellow, Saul. *There is Simply Too Much to Think About: Collected Nonfiction*. New York: Viking, 2015.

Capote, Truman. *Portraits and Observations: The Essays of Truman Capote*. New York: The Modern Library, 2007

Charles & Ray Eames (el al). *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention*. New York: Vitra Design Museum, 2005.

Finder, Henry (editor). *The 50s: The Story of a Decade (The New Yorker)*. New York: Random House, 2015.

Gay, Peter. *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*. New York; W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. New York: Penguin Books, 2016.

Sam Lubell & Darren Bradley. *Mid-Century Modern Architecture Travel Guide: West Coast, USA*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2016.

Franz Schulze & Edward Windhorst. *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Ray, Nicholas. *Alvar Aalto*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

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The Visual Dynamics of

MID-CENTURY MODERN LIFE

Part 2

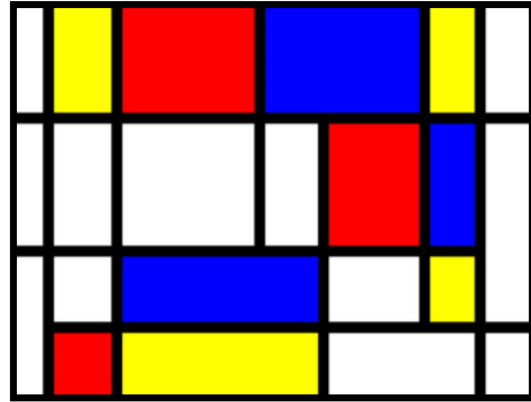
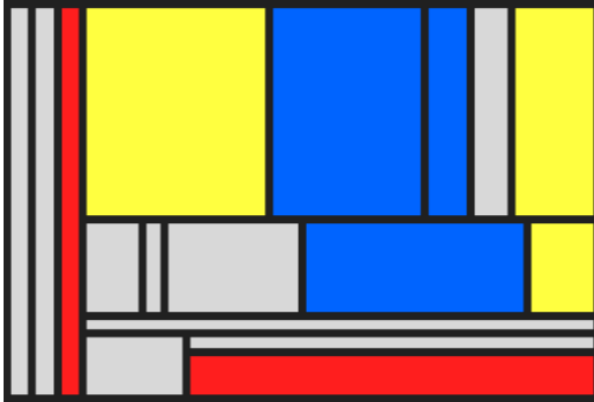
The Monthly Writing Workshop of Balboa Park

Session 5

June, 2017

Park Ranger Allison M. Palmer

Writing Prompts:



Although he worked a bit prior to the middle of the twentieth century, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944)—with his reduction of form and color—certainly prefigured the arrival of abstract expressionism.

1) Imagine that you are attempting to explain the meaning of the two paintings above to a small child. What would you say?

2) You are a blob of paint in one of Jackson Pollock's paintings. You've swirled through a number of different hues in the midst of his famous work, *Lavender Mist*. Now, after taking a bit of time to dry, you look around and notice a number of viewers staring in your direction. They seem mesmerized. Tell us the story of what happens next.

3) You are a newly-hired art critic. For your first assignment, you have been asked to write your impressions of *Gotham News* by Willem de Kooning, pictured on page eight. Please take a few moments to study the lines and textures of the painting, the many blurred edges of color that gradually shift before your eyes and challenge your perceptions. What do you see? How does it impact you?

4) Free write on the following topic: a dried can of red paint and a paintbrush in a loft. The year is 1957.

5) For this next prompt, we are going to consider the work of Piet Mondrian.

In his paintings, Mondrian strove to achieve a universal form of expression by reducing form and color to their simplest components. The artist termed his work 'Neo-Plasticism' and believed: 'it is the task of art to express a clear vision of reality' (Mondrian Biographical Website).

After you examine the works pictured above, write a few comments on the quotation from Mondrian's biography. Do you think he succeeded in his task of expressing a clear vision of reality?

6) The picture on the cover of this publication tells us a story. Who are these people and what is going on with them?

7) What is your first memory of visiting a museum? How old were you and what did you see? I'd like you to write the introduction to this story. Imagine that you are creating content for a blog about art, and you wish to inspire people to embark on their own journeys of creative expression and discovery.

8) Free write on the following topic: a cafe in Paris where the coffee is bad and the conversation is brilliant.

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9) Imagine that you are an advertising executive, arriving at work one morning, almost as if you were a character on television. Just as you settle into your leather chair, and wait for your secretary to bring you a cup of coffee and the *New York Times*, you notice a piece of paper sitting on your desk. You gasp when you see it. What does it say?

10) On page nine, we see a rather famous picture of Willem de Kooning, gazing contemplatively upward. What does he see?

11) What was your first exposure to the work of Jackson Pollock? Do you have a favorite Pollock painting?

12) Do you enjoy painting? I'd like you to write a bit about your medium and inspiration. Can you tell us a brief story about your art or the art you would one day like to create? What are your earliest memories of painting?

13) On page four, we see a cartoon from the postwar era. Depicting a new landscape of hope and possibility, the piece seems very reflective of the age. Do the words of the caption seem relevant today? If the characters in the drawing were to visit you and ask how things are going in the twenty-first century, what would you tell them?

14) On page three, we see a picture of Mark Rothko, an artist noted for his large, beautiful color field paintings. We can see that he is glancing beyond the photographer. Imagine that you are there, and he is speaking to you. What happens next?

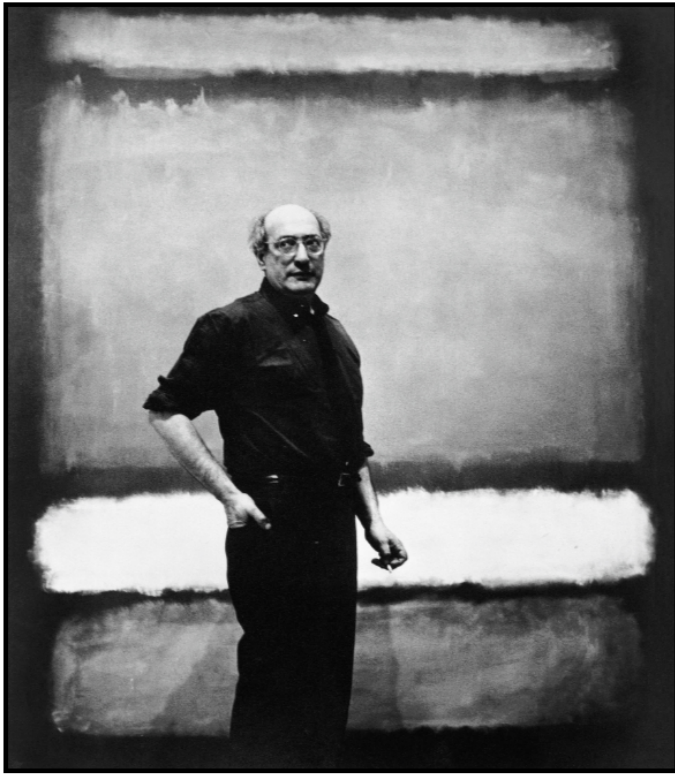
15) Imagine that it's 1960, and you have just been hired to develop an ad campaign to sell abstract expressionist works to suburban families, people who might be entirely unfamiliar with the style. Write the first lines of your press release. How would you sell the art?

16) Turn to page three, again, and take a look at Margo Hoff's piece entitled "Net." I mentioned that her work tends to evoke questions with their ambiguous forms, never forcing any particular narrative on the viewer. Do you agree or see things differently? Tell us the story of what you think is going on with this piece.

17) If you are familiar with Edward Bernays, you know that he is one of the minds behind public relations and the development of modern marketing. With that in mind, imagine that he has agreed to do an interview with you. He is at the height of his powers, having recently found a way to sell cigarettes to housewives. Tell us the story of the interview. What does he reveal to you?

Drawing Exercises:

Draw an abstract composition that captures the exuberance of mid-century modern art. Have fun!



Mark Rothko



Margo Hoff



"Net" (Woodcut from the late 1940s)

Artists of the Mid-Century:

Abstract Expressionism and Beyond

Color and texture were indeed very much a part of the mid-century aesthetic. Innovative forms of visual expression in art complimented the architecture of the age, challenging people to view their living and working spaces in new ways. In the work of Mark Rothko, for example, we find a sense of immersion taking place, as his large canvasses overwhelm the viewer with fields of color. His compelling forms, with their soft, blurred edges, invite a rich variety of viewer responses. What are your impressions?

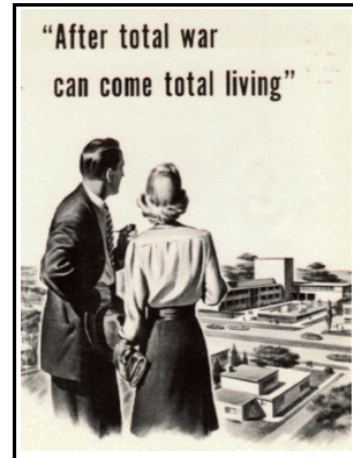
Rothko initiated his career during the 1930s, at the Contemporary Art Gallery in New York. A decade later, he began to blend "primitive" art elements with large, flat shapes, imbuing the abstractions with mythological significance. (1) If the architecture was sleek and futuristic, the painting of mid-century America was raw, emotional and related to primal elements. Indeed, more than anything, the emphasis of Rothko's work has to do with *experience*, a quality he shared with a number of contemporaries, including Margo Hoff.

On her official website, Hoff made mention of being "an autobiographical artist," who "used the events, places, images, remembrances of (her) life as central themes. . . ." After reading this, I viewed a number of the pieces she created, one of my favorites being shown above. What I love about her work is that each image tends to evoke a question, presenting ambiguous forms that suggest an organizing principle (or idea) without actually forcing it upon the viewer. Her colors and forms feel almost dreamlike, being, above all else, aspects of her brilliant autobiographical style.

More than anything, the art of this period—as we see with Rothko and Hoff—prompts the viewer to experience things *and* establish a sense of narrative order from various elements. Although subjectivity was key, a clear purpose was evident; as with architecture and writing, the emphasis was on finding something new, a fresh mode of expression for a generation shaped by the tragedy of war and the promise of economic renewal.



Blue Poles, 1952



New ideas about the possibilities of life were beginning to emerge after the Second World War.

What is abstract expressionism? And how does Jackson Pollock figure into this movement? Let's answer these two questions in preparation for the rest of our journey through the art of the mid-twentieth century.

During the 1940s and 50s, spontaneous creative acts—like dripping paint on a canvass or streaking and jabbing colors across a surface—were being used by New York artists to convey emotional expressions, concepts which were, by their very nature, subjective rather than precise and objective. And Pollock became a master of the technique. What is your impression of *Blue Poles*, shown above?

Jackson Pollock developed a style quite emblematic of the age. With bold gestures of color and subtle textures, his most enduring work creates a feeling of exuberance, along with underlying currents of tension and uncertainty. Indeed, the essence of this artistic movement was unique and powerful; non-representational shapes, rendered as quick expressions rather than studied and deliberate forms, became the artistic adventure of the mid-twentieth century, with Pollock rising to become one of its luminaries. *Tension* was key.

In his work, wild movements of paint never quite fully resolve themselves, suggesting the excitement and anxiety of new things, a future rife with possibility and, yet, still dark with shadows of the past. Abstract expressionism was, in many ways, the counterpoint to the bright spaces and spare elements created by postwar architects. Interestingly, a case study home could have been an ideal exhibit space for Pollock or any of his contemporaries, allowing edgy colors and forms to be visible in the midst of subtle interiors. So, who was the man behind the work?

Born in Cody, Wyoming in 1912, Paul Jackson Pollock was one of those rare artists who enjoyed fame and admiration

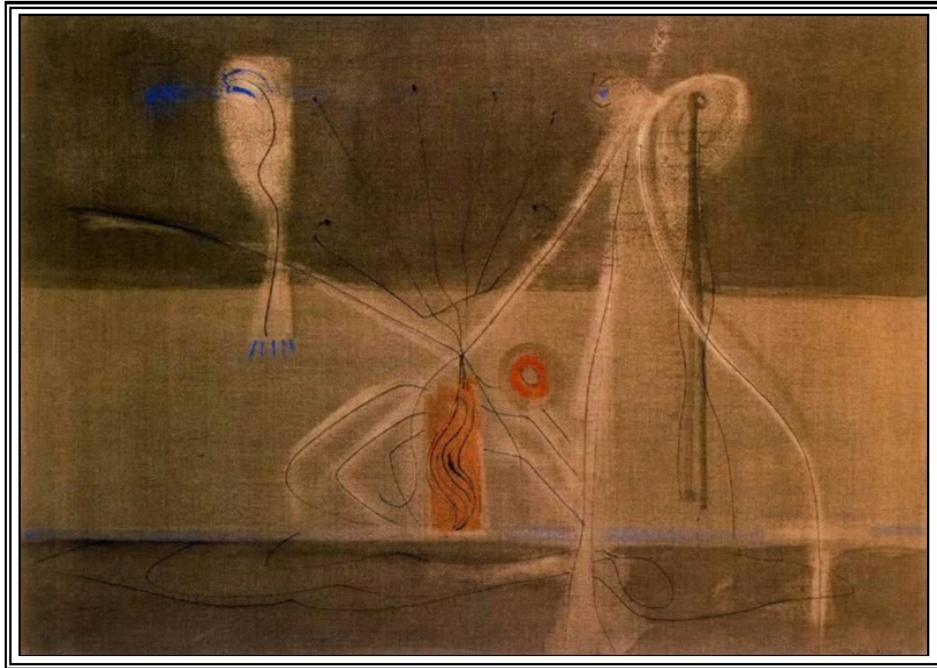
during his lifetime, his mood swings and use of alcohol becoming legendary in the art world—and beyond—when *Life Magazine* published a long article on his techniques and fascinating personality. Tragically, in 1956, while under the influence, Pollock crashed his car into a tree and died.

After working briefly for the WPA Federal Art Project, he began the most productive years of his career, what would simply become known as the “drip period,” during which time a studio in Springs, New York would be his main workspace. Pollock's wife, artist Lee Krasner, is credited with instructing him on the intricacies of modernist painting, and helping him to refine his technique to fit the urbane world of New York art galleries. However, without suitable patronage, none of these endeavors would have sufficed to create the legendary works for which he is celebrated.

The other prominent woman in Pollock's life was Peggy Guggenheim, an art dealer who gave him his first show in 1943, a commission for a mural and a monthly salary. (2)

As we glance at these artists and consider their work, we can begin to understand the fullness of mid-century modern expressions, from the vast and bright spaces created by architects, to the challenges articulated by writers. Although there was a marked contrast between postwar ideals and social inequality, optimism reigned supreme during that era. A degree of wealth and independence led—if indirectly—to a funding of the arts and radical new assertions about life, meaning and freedom. In the area of commerce, as we will consider a bit later, creative ideas were used to sell the products of the era. More than anything, the aesthetics of the age were created by and focused squarely upon those who wanted something new, and had the disposable income (or sufficient patronage) to bring their visions to life.

Portfolio:



Tentacles of Memory, Mark Rothko, 1946

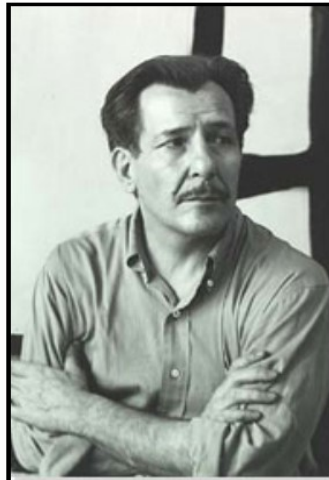


Jagged Sea (Ireland), Margo Hoff, 1968

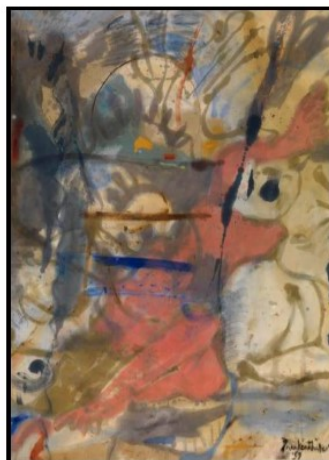
Here, in our little image gallery of the age, we have an array of colors, shapes and forms to consider, from the angles of Franz Kline's face—as seen to the right—to the geometries of one of his paintings. As you continue writing about mid-century culture, I invite you to consider this portfolio of art and ideas.

One of the best ways to augment your memoirs and journal entries is to include casual (or deeply incisive) observations about art and the environment of creative life. Although our monthly workshop is something of a nature writing class, devoted to enriching your experience of the park, we can learn a great deal by studying the work of painters and their perceptions of the environment. To what extent is an abstracted landscape or human form “natural?” This question is one you can explore and answer in the course of your work.

As we have noted, abstract expressionists explored the freedoms available to a victorious and newly prosperous nation. Clearly, it's easier to break the rules when you live in the midst of peace and prosperity.



Artist, Franz Kline



Europa, Helen Frankenthaler, 1957



Astral Nebula, Hans Hofmann, 1961



Hans Hofmann



Four Square, Franz Kline, 1956

Questions & Ideas to Consider:

1) Franz Kline's art can be viewed online. When you compare and contrast his many black and white compositions, what do you find? Was he successful in resolving his angles and gestural expressions into visually pleasing works? Sometimes, entertaining the role of art critic helps us to discover new topics and ideas.

2) Examine *Europa* by Helen Frankenthaler, and the green composition by Hans Hofmann, and list the colors you find. Tell us a story about the various moods conveyed by each hue as it changes. In your opinion, do the colors in these paintings work well? Are the arrangements balanced and pleasing to the eye?

3) Note that multiple images were included in this portfolio to give you a number of things to ponder. What comes to mind as you view them?



Untitled, Hans Hofmann, 1942
Crayon and Ink on Paper



Sculptor, David Smith



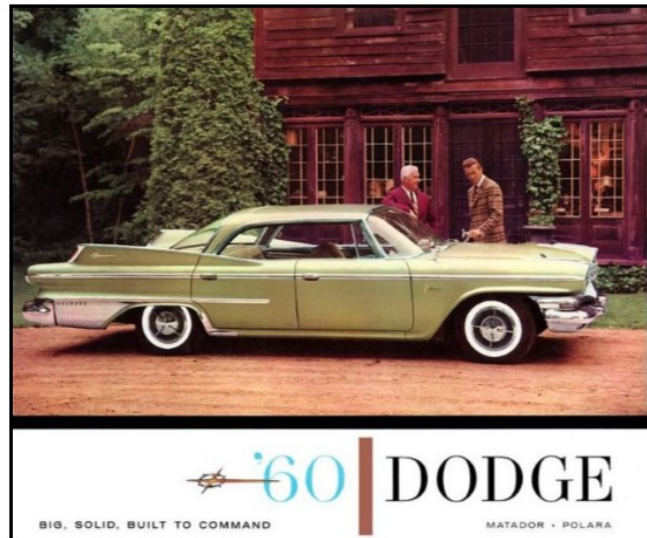
Delightful Ads of the 1950s



Menand II, David Smith, 1963



When we study mid-century art, it's useful to examine the visual elements that surrounded both the art world and the general public, in particular, the bright and almost amusing advertisements of the period. Perhaps the two art forms stand in stark contrast, one devoted to unbridled self-expression, the other wholly given over to commerce. Or, they might have quite a bit in common. Regardless, our work as essayists can only be enriched by studying the postwar visual realms of Madison Avenue and Manhattan art galleries. Even now, the work of many painters, sculptors and advertising executives is shaped by these halcyon years. Can you think of an interesting way to discuss this subject in a nonfiction piece?



Images of Mid-Century Utopian Aspirations



Progress was very much the order of the day. The idea that innovation would define the future was common and well-accepted, becoming a theme favored by advertisers. Today, our desire for plastic-free food products (and sustainable transportation) stands in sharp contrast to the convenience culture of the 1950s. At mid-century, the nation embraced a strange sort of utopia, which endures to this day.

In addition to Pollock, Willem de Kooning is remembered as being a major artist of the abstract expressionist style. He began with highly abstracted figures and culminated his career with landscapes, images composed of sweeping lines and arabesques, gracefully distilled representations of his Long Island home.

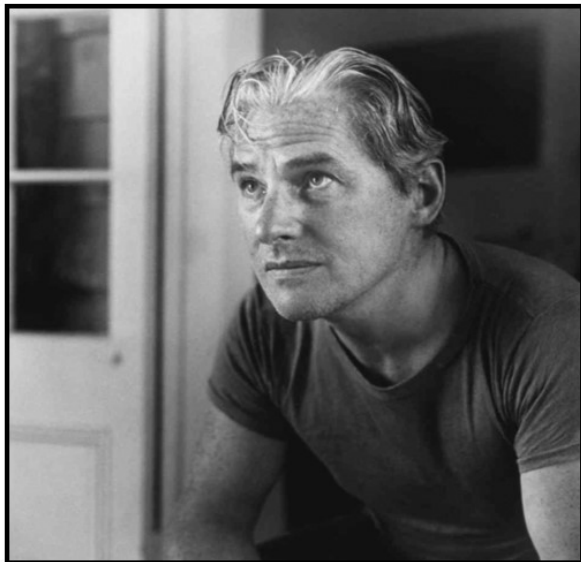
Discussion Questions:

What is your impression of *Gotham News*, the painting you see to the right? Do the forms and colors seem to resolve themselves in an aesthetically pleasing manner?

Born in 1904 in the Netherlands, de Kooning made great use of the gestural style of painting, often abstracting human forms and features according to Cubist and Surrealist influences. And this is perhaps where he veered from the abstract movement as a whole; de Kooning never abandoned his depiction of human beings, choosing instead to subject them to new methods of expression. Many of his works are notable for their inherent sense of incompleteness and constant movement. One feels as if something unforeseen could emerge from *Gotham News*, challenging the viewer to examine each line and every changing hue with care.

Discussion Question:

If you were to purchase a painting for your living room, would you be more likely to select something representational or wildly abstract and colorful? What is your reasoning?



Willem de Kooning



Gotham News, 1955

Known for demonstrating refinement and an intellectual approach to painting, de Kooning became one of the most respected artists of the New York School, challenging colleagues and art collectors to re-think their notions about beauty and continuity. He began with highly-abstracted female forms, and revised them continually, before bringing us the landscapes of his later career. Above all else, de Kooning was complex and prolific.

Discussion Questions:

Regarding your own aesthetic tastes, do you find abstracted human and animal forms to be more challenging and interesting than photo-realist depictions? Do you have any favorite abstract expressionist paintings?

With his consummate understanding of the painting surface, and his ability to abstract things beyond all recognition (or skillfully hint at their representation) de Kooning became one of the most influential artists of the period. It's also worth noting that de Kooning, rather than Pollock, was said to have been the most polished and articulate representative of the new art.

We have only scratched the surface of a deeply complex and exciting period, glancing momentarily at the architects, writers and painters whose work expressed it eloquently. I hope you continue your journey of reading and writing about mid-century American culture. Enjoy!

Allison M. Palmer

1. The Mark Rothko Biography Page website.
2. Dorothy Seiberling, "A Shy and Turbulent Man Who Became a Myth." Life Magazine, November, 1959.

Advertising Art of the 1950s & 60s



It was indeed a period of enthusiastic optimism, the mid-century height of the Industrial Revolution, during which time a tangible middle-class became an economic force and the backbone of American production. For the first time, workers could aspire to purchase the fruits of their labor, as cars, rapidly-constructed homes, and innovative conveniences became plentiful and remained affordable. However, the key to selling those goods had to do with 1) creating the desire to purchase and 2) guiding the purchasing decisions of the public. And with that, a new art form—of sorts—was born.

If we study the work of Edward Bernays (nephew of Sigmund Freud) we can trace the development of public relations and, by extension, understand the many complexities of advertising. From the 1920s on, Bernays learned to present products to the public in such a way as to make new things seem supremely desirable, even when older items were still perfectly useful. By way of *planned obsolescence*—creating things that would seem outdated and less status-worthy after a brief period of time—captains of industry, their public relations specialists, and advertising agents could motivate the people who produced goods to purchase them. Looking back, we can feel nostalgic about the ads created to facilitate this process, back in the days when print media reigned.

Above, we see a charming depiction of postwar luxury; a shiny car announcing to the neighbors that you are successful and therefore worthy of admiration and imitation. The latter response would be essential for the continued growth of industry. So, we find bright colors, clean lines and the glow of prosperous Americans beckoning to readers. The message was clear; satisfaction with one's circumstances was quite unacceptable. And with that, consumer culture began to thrive.

After parking your new status symbol in the driveway of your modern home, you could enjoy the luxury of kitchen appliances and processed foods. It was a wonderland of shiny metal amenities and convenience, a welcome change after the bleak years of rationing and the devastation of war. If we view the art of advertisements along with mid-century architecture and writing, we find the aspirations of new wealth beginning to rise.

As with art and architecture, ads were designed with affluence in mind, aimed at a newly-established middle-class possessed of money and time for enjoyment. And advertising executives of the period were delighted.

In an interview with *The Daily News*, Alen York commented on “the cigarette haze,” “the three-martini buzz,” and “interoffice intrigue” of the era, noting that “impeccably dressed, impressively paid (executives) convinced a nation to buy whatever they were selling.” With this in mind, we can see the development of Madison Avenue as being complementary to the work of artists, writers and architects; someone needed to purchase what was being produced. Although a newly-invigorated economy would generate luxury goods, the engine of commerce also required an ever-increasing customer base. Thus, advertising became a new and powerful art form.

Discussion Questions:

Do you find ads from this era to be more interesting than those of the present day? Did you have a favorite advertisement when you were a child?



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Demetrios, Eames. *An Eames Primer*. New York: Universe Publishing, 2013.

De Duve, Thierry. *Clement Greenberg Between the Lines*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Harrison, Helen A. *Such Desperate Joy: Imagining Jackson Pollack*. New York: Marlow, 2001.

Heinmann, Jim. *All-American Ads: 50s*. Cologne: Taschen, 2003.

Sam Hunter, Malcom R. Daniel. *An American Renaissance: Painting and Sculpture Since 1940*. Abbeville Press, 1986.

Greenberg, Clement. *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol 1*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Ingo, Walter F. *Art of the 20th Century*. London: Taschen, 2012.

Stevens, Mark. *De Kooning: An American Master*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Kenneth Wayne (et. al). *Color Field Revisited: Painting from the Albright-Knox Art Gallery*. Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2004.

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Film

Noir

The Narrative

of Contrasts

Part One: Image, Aura, and Metaphor

The Monthly Writing Workshop of Balboa Park

Session 6

Summer, 2017

Park Ranger Allison M. Palmer

Noir

Introduction:



Film Noir: The Narrative of Contrasts

Part One: Image, Aura, and Metaphor



Writing Prompts	1
Comments and Discussion	
Interruptions of Darkness	2
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Light, Shadow, and Abstraction	9
Further Reflections and Comments	

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Writing Prompts:

1) The noir period of film history is defined by the light and dark elements used to create its visual narrative, the forms and shadows that reflect, to some extent, the mindset of the world at mid-century. Imagine that you have been asked to write a press release for the film *Laura*, a truly classic example of the period. Bearing in mind the qualities of noir films noted above, write your press release, as if you were announcing *Laura* to the world for the very first time. For inspiration, you can study the movie poster on page four.

2) On page two, at the top, we see an interesting photograph, a frame rendered with a man's face as the primary element. Next to him is the image of a woman with a gun, a reflection he appears to see along with his own. To his left, we see a larger image of the woman's face, a transparent element, slightly overlapping his left eye, as if to imply some sort of connection between the two. Now, I want you to explain exactly what their relationship is and why they are in this situation.

3) At the bottom of page two, we see the photograph of a woman in a white turban. The lighting has been designed to render her features soft and luminous, accentuating her expression of mild concern. Tell us what is happening in this photo. What is she about to say? How did she arrive where she is, wearing her lovely turban?

Continued on page 95



Interruptions of Darkness: The Mood of Noir Films

Most scholars tend to recognize the noir films as being reflective of a time period, rather than a particular genre, each one bearing the same style of lighting and camera placement—albeit with different themes. Though the duration of the period spans roughly twenty years, for our purposes, we will focus mainly on images and ideas related to the 1940s. So, what are some of the elements involved? In general, we find ourselves exploring a style that uses the high contrast of black and white to shape light into expressive filters, devices that simultaneously illuminate and obscure. In short, we can say that interruptions of darkness largely create the noir mood.

Discussion Questions:

Some of the most memorable films of the period were:

The Maltese Falcon (1941)

Laura (1944)

Double Indemnity (1944)

The Woman in the Window (1944)

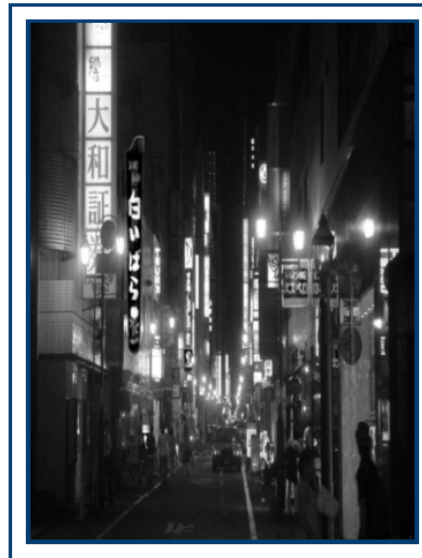
Have you seen any of these films? What do you remember most about them? Would you say that the plot details were well-served by the lighting and cinematography?

In the realm of film noir, we have something unique and fascinating, a visual style designed to make us question whether or not ordinary, peaceful things are to be trusted as such; in short, we have an aesthetic of tension and ambiguity. Let's consider this a bit further.

Although narrative themes varied widely, the visual elements of these films were consistent in their contrasts, conveying—apart from plot devices and characters—a sense of ambiguity, a mood of foreboding, the antithesis of mid-century architecture and decor. Seductive women and sneering private investigators moved through shadow realms, where only brief interruptions of light occurred. Middle-class husbands conspired to murder their unsuspecting wives. More than anything, film noir classics remind us that shadows lurk in otherwise bright, prosaic spaces; note the sense of psychological tension conveyed by the top photo on this page. The image, with its dark undertones and shadows, creates tension by merging the past with the present.

Discussion Questions:

When I examine the most compelling static images of noir films, I am reminded of photography, recalling an insightful comment from critic John Berger: "The true content of a photograph is invisible, for it derives from a play, not with form, but with time." Motion picture images create the present moment, unifying many elements into a single presentation. Static images, however, utilize time as well, albeit with different results. In the first photo, we derive a sense of the past and present merging into a single moment of conflict, as the woman's face blends seamlessly



into the helpless man, who can do nothing but await his fate. The image has become, not only an instrument of psychological persuasion, but (according to its arrangement) a manipulator of time, as the past and present merge to create an inexorable future event. Notice how darkness frames the characters and each key element of the scene.

Do you feel a sense of time unfolding as you examine these movie images? The shadowy recesses of Chinatown, the gaze of a woman wearing an elegant white turban, all point to a compelling experience of time, where everything is obscured by uncertainty. With this in mind, I want you to write the continuation of the photo above. What happens in the next frame?

Interruptions of darkness—or light—can convey a sense of time and emotion with great impact. Now, let's move a bit deeper into this subject and consider the *aura* of film images.

Theorist Walter Benjamin defines the term in his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility."

"What, then, is the aura? A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be. To follow with the eye—while resting on a summer afternoon—a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder is to breathe the aura of those mountains, of that branch."

Within the context of his wider examination of art, and the process of reducing original expressions into technological reproductions, Benjamin describes the ineffable quality of aesthetic experience. In the top photo on the page, we can sense a "strange tissue of space and time."

Noir Portfolio :



Black and White or Color?

Perhaps we should be grateful that the colorized version of the announcement for *Double Indemnity*, a true classic of the noir period, faded into obscurity. The power of these films has everything to do with the way in which directors and cinematographers used light and shadow, crafting images of texture and depth, depicting an ongoing struggle between darkness and the higher aspirations represented by light. Beyond the narrative strength conveyed by black and white images, we find a simpler and more obvious issue at hand; the colorized version of the characters was comical and not dramatic.



Certain applications of color created memorable movie posters, while others clearly did not. In the case of *Laura*, one of the most admired noir films, success was achieved with bold complementary colors and minimal use of text.



As we examine a more aesthetically pleasing version of the *Double Indemnity* poster, we find that myriad shades of gray do far more to capture the complexity of the characters than do the strange, almost comical shades of the color version. The former example has the main characters lapsing into self parody, as unnatural hues render them a spectacle of curiosity rather than one of intrigue and mystery. With this in mind, we could argue that the simplicity of black and white creates a particular kind of cinematic environment, one conducive to a dramatic narrative. And perhaps this is the most salient feature of the noir period, the intricate points and counterpoints of light and shadow created by directors—an atmosphere of dark possibilities. Write a paragraph giving your impression of these ideas.



The visual style of noir films, with their powerful incursions of light reaching into dark, forbidding places, always seems to leave us on edge, uncertain as to which power will ultimately prevail. Here, we see Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray contrasted sharply, not only by way of their relationship to camera placement, but also according to plays of light and shadow. As he enters the dark room, MacMurray's face is bathed in light, blending the angles into an expression of moderate concern. The soft folds of his jacket are emphasized by the gray material, a sharp contrast to Stanwyck's dark jacket and less illuminated face. To enhance the impact, the door divides them, raising questions in the viewer's mind. Will the side of goodness and light prevail, or that of darkness?

As essayists, we can learn quite a bit from studying this photo, noting how we might describe its aesthetic impact, and consider its place in the realm of noir images. For example, you could write a critique of the frame shown above, commenting on whether or not it works from the standpoint of balance and composition. From there, you could use your critique as a point of departure for an essay on film in general.

Suspense was also a key feature of certain noir period films. Although themes and storylines varied somewhat, each example of noir is characterized by a certain style, exemplified by the way in which directors chose to use cameras and lighting. As we examine the publicity still to the right, we find, once again, the awkwardness of color detracting from content. It seems almost as though we are looking at a comic book, where an over-emphasized expression of horror makes its point too emphatically. In order to appreciate the noir content of *Sudden Fear*, and enjoy Joan Crawford's true acting ability, we must leave the full-color depiction aside and view the black and white production, with its strong visual narrative.





Now that we have seen some examples of movie posters and publicity stills from the period, let's consider a bit further how we might write about the elements of noir films. Since our emphasis in this workshop series has to do with the environment, let's consider how the outdoor setting contrasts with that of the sound stage, the most constrained indoor realm one could imagine, a place where relationships are contrived and everything is a prop.

In the movie poster to the left, where James Mason stands against a backdrop suggestive of a full moon, and a bit of greenery hints not at the beauty of nature, but instead towards a shadowy sense of danger and uncertainty, we find yet another example of how the awkward use of color detracts from the dramatic content of the film. As Joan Bennett crouches and casts a shadow, there is a palpable sense of tension, almost comedic in its intensity, a device used to bait moviegoers into purchasing tickets. Although heavily contrived, it nonetheless has a certain charm, very indicative of mid-century culture, with the glaring colors and melodramatic postures. How could we use this image as a point of departure for an essay?

It might be interesting to consider how natural elements are used in the film. When the actors are outdoors, how is the environment depicted? In other words, how does the director incorporate nature into the noir elements of the film to achieve its impact? What are your thoughts?



Here, we see an iconic image of Gene Tierney from the film *Laura*, perhaps the quintessential example from the period. This still image reminds us of the many splendid black and white photos generated from these films. Earlier, we noted that a photo can play with time, giving us a sense of immediacy although the moment has ended. When you see this image, and consider the idea of time, what do you feel inspired to write?



The Light of Intrigue

On page three, we considered a quote from critic John Berger, who noted that the content of a photo is invisible, pertaining not to forms but to the play on time that the image creates. As you study the picture to the left, what do you see? The subject is rendered in high-contrast, as the darkness of her hair juxtaposes her complexion and the color of her outfit, the effect being enhanced by the brightest aspect of the photo, blurred foliage that creates a bit of texture in the background. Again, the sense of time is very tangible, giving us a longing gaze from decades past, inviting us to speculate about the moments that followed.

How would you write about this picture? Does the soft glow of the subject inspire you to speculate about time as well as form?

In the second part of this workshop, we will address the technical aspects of the noir period in detail. For the moment, however, we can look back on some of the general concepts discussed earlier, not only from Berger, but also from Benjamin. The latter spoke about the aura of a visual moment, the “strange tissue of time and space, the unique apparition of a distance.” How does this concept apply to the picture you see to the right? Although Benjamin was referencing the actual moment of experience, and not the mechanical reproduction of it, we can, for our purposes, take the liberty of expanding the idea. Do the contrasting tones evoke a sense of space and time, in a philosophical or aesthetic sense, as you examine the image? What about the distance implied by the stance of the characters and the lighting?



Now that we have discussed how static images, as well as their moving counterparts, can be shaped by light and shadow—and convey a sense of time and distance—we can think about breaking things down a bit more.

As you consider the various elements in the picture to the left, I want you to list what you see in minute detail, everything from the gray lines of the chamber to the folds and creases of the characters' clothing. Each element is part of the larger narrative, establishing a mood of darkness, apparent even without the aid of motion or the auditory presence of dialogue. Overall, as you reach back in time to engage this photo, what do you see?

Through shades of gray, the characters' story unfolds before our eyes, an experience which easily extends to our viewing of the city scene. The soft light of Chinatown provides an aural texture, as does the woman in the white turban, whose gaze reaches out to us from the previous century. We feel the moments and events as if they had just taken place, as if we, ourselves, were wandering the dark streets, or anxiously awaiting a few words from a luminous stranger. Indeed, the images of a noir film speak to the *tissue of space and time*, the aura described by Benjamin—albeit as a direct inversion of his theory.

Discussion Questions:

I want you to reach back into your most vivid memories, either pertaining to a film or a piece of art you viewed, or, perhaps, to a moment you experienced while camping or hiking. Now, I want you to tell us how it relates to that which is aural, that is, to the impact of a *tissue of space and time* that defines your experience of the moment.

We have seen how noir still images, because of the drama of high-contrast, can play with our sense of time, in the same way that a splendid black and white photograph can capture an indescribable sense of the moment. We have also taken an opportunity to examine the concept of aural experience defined by Benjamin. Going further, we find that the fuller expression of this concept, involving the “unique apparition of a distance” is also key to our experience of time.

Time spent in the environment—viewing mountains or the encroaching shadows of dusk—conveys, perhaps, the “apparition of a distance,” a separation which may not truly exist. However, in the case of a mechanical reproduction, like a film, that distance is undeniably factual. The moment ended long ago. Yet, by technological means, a dark city can still evoke intrigue, even long past its glory days, as can the heroine, who grew old long before certain members of her audience were born. To some extent, technology, not only as a means of reproduction but also as a vehicle of expression, retains a form of aura, albeit of a distinct variety. With film, the poetic sense of distance and time is never entirely separated from the actual distance created by reproduction. What are your thoughts in this area?

Now that we have thought about the image, its relationship to time, in addition to its intangible aesthetic impact, we need to think about metaphor.

Film is visual. Rest assured that we will delve into the technical aspects of noir lighting and camera placement in part two of this workshop. However, for the time being, we will benefit from exploring the concept of metaphor, a literary device that moves easily from the bounds of written language into the realm of visual discourse. As we will discuss later on, a prop, as well as a brilliantly composed camera frame, can either enhance the words of a narrative or replace them entirely with the power of an image. So, how can we best understand a metaphor? Webster's *Dictionary* tells us that it involves transferring a term from the object it ordinarily designates to one which it can only designate implicitly. Beyond this, Denis Donoghue discusses the subject at length in his outstanding book, *Metaphor*. On page 182, he references Quintilian as he considers “the resources of language.”

“(Metaphor) also adds to the resources of language by exchanges or borrowings to supply its deficiencies, and (hardest task of all) it ensures that nothing goes without a name.”

“Sometimes it can be achieved without much ado: a word is taken out of its proper setting and placed elsewhere for some good purpose.”

Donoghue goes on to use Yeats's poem “In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz” as an example.

“Two girls in silk kimonos, both/ Beautiful, one a gazelle.”

He reminds us that the figure of speech in use is not a simile; the girl is not *like* a gazelle. Rather, to the poet, she is one. How does this apply, then, to our consideration of the noir film period?

The noir frame is generally filled with symbolic references, rendered with light and shadow. On page two, Robert Mitchum's character stands before a blurred set of pipes, which protrude not as mechanical implements but as agents of danger, metaphors, if you will, of the perils he faces in an unfamiliar setting. Again, the buildings of Chinatown are ordinary structures being presented as agents of danger and intrigue, something very different from their intended purpose of providing shelter.

As we continue, bear in mind that the noir image, as it plays with time and aura, is filled with elements that convey subtle metaphors and symbolic double-meanings, each frame confronting us with interruptions of darkness.

Light, Shadow, and Abstraction:

Further Reflections on the Noir



We have reflected on the extent to which renderings of light and shadow, along with innovative camera placement, define the noir period, giving rise not so much to a thematic development in film, but establishing a style of ambiguity. When we see how hard lighting—of intense luminosity—brings angles and edges to the fore, and compare it to soft light, we gain a sense of the great contrast for which the period is known. However, we can go further and question the degree to which stark contrasts in lighting can give rise to abstraction. In other words, does ambiguity itself tend to create abstraction? How can we explore this line of thinking in order to enrich and inform our nonfiction writing?

Discussion Questions:

If we look at page two, and study the shadows cast on the subject's face, considering the way in which his tie and collar seem to dissolve into his jacket, and then examine

the blurred background of pipes, ominously suggesting that he is out of his element, and, perhaps, in terrible danger, we find an ambiguous depiction. Add to this, the fact that we cannot see half of his face in this still frame, so we don't know what his eyes might reveal. We have before us a classic noir rendering in black and white. Is he a hero or a villain? Is he, perhaps, a bit of both? What do you see when you examine this picture?

Although noir films spanned genres and thematic content, many of them were very dour in nature, featuring morally ambiguous characters who were neither lovable nor fully detestable, but merely flawed and human. As I watch old films like *Laura*, I am reminded of the concept of a spiral staircase, as it pertains to the human mind; elements of light and shadow tell the story of someone who struggles with inner turmoil. As he faces the challenges of life, each stair either leads him up, towards a hazy light, or hurls him down into a heavy morass of shadows. With this imagery in mind, we find a powerful psychological abstraction at work in noir films; the high-contrast of black and white elements presents a displacement of emotional experience, which would probably seem less defined and dramatic in color. Indeed, light and shadow offer us basic, almost primal elements with which to depict the depths and shallows of the human mind.

Discussion Questions:

My own view is that high-contrast black and white films and photos do tend to convey something ineffable, a quality of ambiguity and abstraction, beyond what their color counterparts can express. If you can, try to imagine an image you recently saw on high-definition television, with all of its dense saturation of color and compelling sense of depth. Now, think of the emotional impact you felt. Is it comparable to what you experience when viewing a noir film? High-definition images are not intended to be abstract or ambiguous, just the opposite, really. Are they, for that reason, somewhat divested of emotional content?

If you were to write about the themes we have discussed, what form would the piece take? Would it be literary nonfiction, a short story, or a poem?

4) It's a winter night in Chicago. The year is 1941. You have just eaten dinner at a local restaurant, and wander into the snowfall of a cold and ominous night. Suddenly, you come face-to-face with a tearful woman, a trembling figure who reaches out to you, trying, unsuccessfully, to speak a few words. What happens next?

5) Free write on the following: a fountain pen and a bed of roses. The year is 1944. Tell us the story of these props.

6) I want you to look back on your favorite noir film. Thinking about Benjamin's concept of aura, discussed earlier, tell us how the film in question conveyed—or did not convey—the “strange tissue of space and time” or the “unique apparition of a distance.” In general was there something compelling about the film that made you feel as though it had reached out to you in some way?

7) On page seven, we see Vincent Price and Gene Tierney conversing at an elegant party. For the moment, let's ignore the actual plot details of the film and imagine the conversation. What is their body language telling you? How do the noir elements of the frame come into play?

Do they lead you to draw certain conclusions about what is being said and the events that preceded their encounter? Tell us the story.

8) The year is 1947, and you are a screenwriter attempting to create your masterpiece. Your protagonist, Detective Smith of LAPD, has just launched an investigation into a murder. He has discovered an envelop in the shrubs of a quiet suburban neighborhood. Just as he prepares to collect it, a woman approaches and says, “I wouldn't do that, if I were you.” What happens next? Write some exciting lines of dialogue to tell us the story.

9) Noir films are rich with symbolic props and intricately designed sets. Imagine that you are a director. Your task today is to write a narrative describing the set you wish to have created. Your characters are both private detectives, gumshoes who are about to discuss their latest cases. They have agreed to meet in an old warehouse. What does it look like? Are they meeting at night? Tell us the story of what happens by describing the set.

10) And, finally, free write on the badge you see on the adjacent page. Is it a piece of vintage police gear, something we might see in a noir film? Can you give us a vivid description of the detective to whom it belongs?

Looking Ahead to Part 2:

During the first part of this workshop, we touched on a number of ideas, the characteristics of the noir image, the relevance of time and space—the aural quality of the work in question. In the second part, we will delve into the technical aspects of the period, the unique camera placements and applications of light that characterize the films of that time. We will also touch on some of the more common themes treated by directors. With all of this in mind, I would like you to write your impressions on the noir period. What stands out in your mind, when you think about your favorite films of the era? Are there topics that we did not discuss that you feel need to be addressed in order to understand the subject?

Concluding Thoughts:

I would like you to think about your own writing projects. Could you—or, would you—incorporate the subject of noir films into a blog post, an essay, or, even into the content of your personal journal? In short, the imaginative content and powerful images of these movies can inspire a number of writing projects. As an essayist, you can watch your favorite old movies and find a wealth of ideas to develop. I wish you all the best for your adventure!





The End

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Music

And Creative Writing:

A Narrative of Sounds

A Balboa Park Educational Programs & Services Workshop Presented by

Park Ranger A. M. Palmer

June 11, 2016



Outline:



- 1) Introductions
- 2) Where Music and Writing Meet
- 3) Music References & Bibliography
- 4) Writing Prompts
- 5) Closing Comments

Composition:

Where Writing and Music Meet



To compose, to bring words or notes into meaningful relationship, and create an *experience* for one's audience, is to create art. And, although the writer and musician have distinct tasks, anticipating different outcomes with what they produce, we find that they do indeed have certain things in common regarding composition; the writer combines words and meanings according to harmony, continuity and rhythm, while the musician aspires to do likewise. To that extent, considering the two forms of expression in juxtaposition sheds light on both of them.

There is something ethereal that the writer and composer engage, as they create. Language seems resistant to the fullness of expressing a concept or idea, just as notes of sound only hint at the theme in question. Yet, both processes still manage to evoke feeling—emotional response—beyond what their creators likely imagined. How can this happen? Let us consider a passage from *Orality and Literacy* by Walter J. Ong:

All sensation takes place in time, but sound has a special relationship to time unlike that of the other fields that register in human sensation. Sound exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as evanescent (p. 32).

Sound possesses its impact precisely because it passes quickly, only becoming evident as it begins to fade. Add to this, the poignancy of well-composed notes and

appropriate intervals of time, and the potential for music to move us is inestimable. In point of fact, the ancient Greeks knew this quite well. As noted by Wayne D. Bowman, in *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*:

... music's undisputed power and importance precipitated more than a little concern about its potentially adverse effects: its sensuality, its capacity to deceive, its capacity to undermine state security (p. 19).

Bowman goes on to note that the ancient Greeks lived their music to a far greater degree than do the people of our time and culture, making it no surprise that even Plato delved into philosophical discourse on the subject. "His attitude toward it was one of both profound respect and deep suspicion" (p.20).

Discussion Questions & Exercises:

- 1) What is your favorite instrumental composition? When did you first hear it? Does it remind you of a certain period in your life or a certain event? Tell us.
- 2) Have you ever written about it? Write an introductory paragraph about the piece, keeping in mind the fact that its evanescence and its ability to inspire—and perhaps even deceive—are central to its power.
- 3) Imagine that you are teaching a course on music and philosophy. One of your students asks an interesting question: what is music? What will you tell her?

So, we can appreciate music purely as sound, something which impacts us only as it begins to fade out of existence. However, we can also value it for the power it holds over our emotions, its ability to pervade spiritual and intellectual life, as noted by the ancient Greeks. Now, let's go a bit further and consider certain genres of music, this before we examine its relationship to the written word.

In 1956, Andre Hodeir wrote an innovative book for that era. *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence* viewed this new and decidedly American art form as an important cultural movement; it was more than music. In his mind, adolescents enjoyed jazz not because they had specialized knowledge of music, but because they appreciated the genre's abundance of energy and enthusiasm, a great tide that flowed all the way into the age of rock and roll. At any rate, Hodeir recognized that jazz was energetic and

improvisational, qualities which were appropriated by an entire generation of writers, artists who defined the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac being the most famous. He crafted breathless, jazz-inspired sentences which sometimes continued the length of the entire page, bringing to mind the passion of youth and discovery.

I am finally entrenched in the vision that I rediscovered my soul with the 'crowded events of men' only now it's me, myself smack in it—at the moment, flush because I'm going to start earning within a matter of hours I'm having a huge fifteen cent beer in a bar off the waterfront . . . (*Visions of Cody*).

The idea was not so much to remain faithful to traditions of grammar, or, for that matter, the time-honored subject matter of war and romance, but to express the experience of the moment, an improvisation of words likened to the performance of jazz.

4) Writing as if one were playing a flurry of notes is not to everyone's liking. However, as an exercise, it can enable us to see how language and musical composition merge. With that in mind, write a paragraph as if you were a trumpeter playing a flurry of notes. It can be about the first shades of twilight emerging into the sky, or the colors and forms of your favorite painting, anything you like.

As writers we plan, compose, edit and revise according to a great deal of thought. A look at improvisation can therefore be helpful as we develop our craft. Consider that the spontaneous creation of music—within a group performance context—made certain musicians legendary.

Charlie Parker is above all an improviser of genius. He doesn't have Louis Armstrong's or Fats Waller's acting gifts and radiance, Gillespie's stage presence, or Duke Ellington's organizing ability. Nevertheless, when he took over the band in 1946, he managed at the very outset to give it a style and to maintain it (Hodeir, p. 113).

This is an important thing to remember in all artistic endeavor; although talents vary greatly, the one who thinks on her feet and dares to improvise often creates a powerful style, a mark which cannot be imitated by contemporaries.

In the area of music, jazz and classical seem to be the best suited for comparisons to the act of writing. Let's conclude by examining the fugue, a standard of classical

music. This will add a bit of variety to our reflections.

Generally expressed in three parts—an exposition, a development and a final entry—the form treats a single theme as a multi-layered progress through tone. An initial voice sounds, addressing the subject of the piece. Then, after it concludes, a second voice addresses the same subject at a different pitch, with additional voices rising to repeat in the same manner. Although this is a musical form, its counterpart in mathematics is called a "strange loop," likened to progressing up a piano keyboard only to find oneself in the same position, but an octave higher. As writers, we can apply this concept of moving up a tonal scale, and layering voices, as a method of constructing narratives. Although this could be a method for writing a novel, let's consider simplifying things for a brief exercise.

5) Imagine a character who begins a journey from his front door. He travels to many distant lands, marries and holds a number of different jobs. However, in the end, he is back home again, only quite a bit older and living exactly one story above his original dwelling. He is stunned. Write a paragraph describing how he feels and what he makes of his situation.

A Note on Nature:

As Ong noted, sound only impacts us once it begins to decay. Consider this when you hear a waterfall, or the sound of wind rushing through leaves. Like the flurry of notes coming from a trumpet, such things are ephemeral. With that in mind, write a paragraph describing the music one hears in the midst of nature, be it a thunder storm or the sound of a songbird at the height of summer.



Chorus.

Back home a - gain In In - di - an - a, And it seems that I can

Composition Prompts:



1) What song or composition is the most meaningful and compelling to you? Imagine that the sound of it, the various instruments and vocal elements, could be compared to colors. Write a brief narrative translating the music into a vivid palette of hues.

2) The act of playing music is said to involve the entire brain, causing something like neurological harmony to take place. This may well account for the sense of wholeness and well-being one experiences even when listening to—rather than playing—a favorite song or composition. Tell us about your own experiences in this area. Can you recall hearing music at a moment when clarity and cohesiveness seemed especially apparent? Tell us about it. Where were you when this happened? How old were you?

3) Imagine that you are a lead guitarist. You are performing at a large venue, for the very first time. Everything is going well, until you see an older man in the front row. He looks you in the eye and holds up a sign that says “Stop Right Now!” What happens next?

4) Think about one of your favorite excursions into nature, perhaps a hiking trip or an afternoon spent kayaking. Write some song lyrics about the occasion. Who were your companions? During the outing, did you learn anything about life that you could associate with nature?

5) Analog synthesizers create and shape sound-waves with their various electronic components. They were developed into popular musical instruments by a man named Bob Moog, who pioneered subtractive analog synthesis during the 1960s. Imagine that you are writing a tribute to him, and his many endeavors, in the form of a story. The main character is the actual sound-wave being created and shaped deep in the circuitry of a Moog synthesizer. What is the wave’s name? Where is it going, as it moves from one filter to the next, feeling itself splitting into different directions? Does it want to be a loud, distorted sound, or a soft, natural noise, like falling rain or howling wind? Tell us the story of Bob Moog’s creation.

6) A small child asks you what music is and why it matters. What do you say to him?

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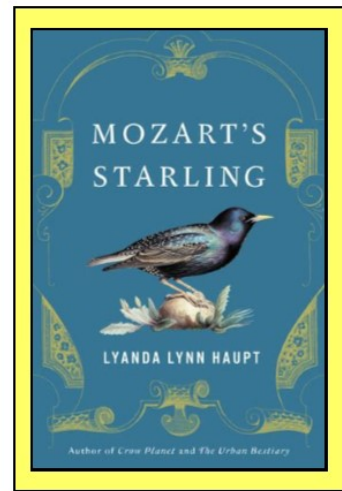
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Folio Four
The Chollas Book Club





*The
Book Club
of*



Chollas *Lake*

Presented by
Park Ranger Allison M. Palmer

Session 1

June 8, 2019

Author Notes:

Lyanda Lynn Haupt

In her own words, Haupt says, “I am a writer, naturalist, mother, master birder (that is actually a thing), wildlife watcher, dirt worshipper, obsessive diarist, closet-poet, knitter, barefoot walker, woodland wanderer. I believe connection to nature inspires our deepest imaginings, artfulness, intelligence, and activism.” In addition, her biography states that she “has created and directed educational programs for Seattle Audubon, worked in raptor rehabilitation in Vermont, and been a seabird researcher for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.” Haupt lives in Seattle with her husband and daughter.



Exploring the Art of Memoir (and the Enigma of Starlings)

The beauty of nature is rendered more tangible through memoir. In works such as *Mozart's Starling*, we find not only the life experience of an avowed “woodland wanderer,” but an insightful biography of a composer and his animal companion, as well. It’s remarkable that a small bird, whose forte is mimicry, can inspire such devotion from humans, Haupt even going so far as to adopt one from a local park and raise it by hand. As a skilled memoirist, her recounting of the story becomes a journey in and of itself.

As for starlings, they are certainly no less remarkable than the people who cherish them.

With iridescent black feathers, plumes that exhibit a number of subtle colors, the starling is otherwise modest in its physical characteristics, being roughly 20 centimeters. Considered a passerine bird, it displays white speckles at various intervals of the year. Common starlings are native to Europe and western Asia but have been introduced to numerous other regions, hence what is known as “the starling problem.” But something about this songbird led an accomplished author to drag her husband to the park one night on a mission; she was determined to capture one and raise it. For a naturalist, a great proliferation of starlings presents an opportunity rather than an actual problem. This gives us our point of departure.



Questions and Highlights

1) After reading the first chapter, and hearing about the author's feeling regarding starlings, can you think of a similar feeling you had about wildlife? Perhaps you found yourself rescuing a bird or small animal as you were exploring woodland areas. Can you relate to the author on any level?

Continuing with the text, Haupt says, "It is intriguing that a bird so common, likely the bird most often seen by city dwellers, is so little understood, or even recognized" (p. 53). Here, I am reminded that the beauty of common things is often easily overlooked. That the starling shimmers magnificently in the sun, yet often escapes our notice, is interesting, definitely something for the memoirist and nature enthusiast to consider.

2) Can you, as a reader and explorer of the environment, think of any experiences that bring this situation to mind? Consider the notion of ordinary beauty.

Although magnificent in appearance and glorious in song, this bird is invasive in many parts of the world. "In the 1800s, 'acclimatization societies' began to form across the country (. . .) The aim of the societies was to introduce European species that would be 'interesting and useful' to the seemingly deprived New World species . . ." (p. 54). Here, we find Haupt switching from her role as a memoirist to become both a biographer and

a natural historian. And this is what makes nonfiction writing so deeply interesting; in order to tell, not only one's own story but the story of others and the surrounding world, as well, one must appreciate numerous disciplines.

As we make our way into the book, the narrative retains a playful storytelling tone, even as it develops in different directions. Indeed, a compelling biography or work of natural history requires the elements of a good story, from deft character development to strong plotlines and descriptions. This is demonstrated as Haupt tells us the story of Eugene Schieffelin, the New York pharmacist who decided to introduce all the various bird species found in Shakespeare's oeuvre into Central Park—what would today be considered an act of ecoterrorism (p. 54).

3) Is it ironic that such a magnificent bird is now, because of its prevalence, overlooked and undervalued?

Again, the role of biography is important when creating a nonfiction narrative. With this in mind, Haupt acquaints us with a group of starling enthusiasts who meet on a regular basis.

"The Starling Talk members have learned from sad experience that if you have a starling loose in the house, you must avoid leaving glasses of any liquid on the counter so that your bird will not lean in to get a drink, get its wings pinned, and drown . . ." (p. 58).

As we learn a bit about the man who helped to introduce starlings into Central Park, and hear of the woes shared by bird owners, Haupt takes us on an ecological and social journey.

4) Does anyone here belong to a group similar to Starling Talk? If so, tell us a bit about it and how you came to be involved.

In addition to memoir, biography, natural history and biology, the author touches on the subject of music, as well. Starlings are, above all else, songbirds whose skills of mimicry have long been admired—by no less than Mozart himself. As for Haupt, she used her violin playing to inspire her adopted bird to sing and create compositions, and learned quite a few fascinating things about avian musicianship in the process.

“Carmen (the bird) places her bill between two strings, opens her mandibles wide, and then pulls her bill out, so both strings ring” (p. 130). Also of interest is the fact that starlings can continue to learn new vocalizations, year after year.

After discussing Carmen’s musical talent, Haupt provides a narrative description of Mozart’s Concerto in G, giving us a sense that the music is itself an aspect of nature. And this brings us to the subject of language.

Beyond mimicking notes of music and melodies—and even making her own sounds on the violin—Carmen could also imitate voices and form sentences with the words she had heard. “Either she’d put the words together in a new way that helped make sense (she jumbled up her repertoire all the time), or we had unwittingly been saying, ‘C’mere, honey,’ and she’d latched onto it” (p. 148).

Humans have long been impressed by avian uses of language, not only their ability to mimic voices but also the odd skill by which they repeat phrases, sometimes creating sentences by happenstance. Haupt’s starling gave her pause to consider the ways in which we create and share meaning.

5) What are your experiences with animals and language? Have you found your pets able to understand your words as well as your body language in unexpected ways?

We have discussed a few highlights and ideas from the book, among them the many skills employed by nonfiction writers, as well as the intricacies of songbird behavior. Enjoy the rest of your reading experience, and join us next month for another lively book discussion at Chollas Lake.

Additional Books of Interest:

Carlton, Geoffrey. *Birds of Central Park*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 2005.

Collins, Victor B. *The Distribution, Breeding, Biology, and Migration of the Starling *Sturnus Vulgaris* in Ontario*. Toronto: University of Toronto Thesis, 1960.

Couser, Thomas G. *Memoir: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Davenport, Marcia. *Mozart*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1995 (1932).

John Elder & Robert Finch. *Nature Writing: The Tradition in English*. New York: Norton, 2002.



Folio Five

Word Searches



Mid-Century Modern

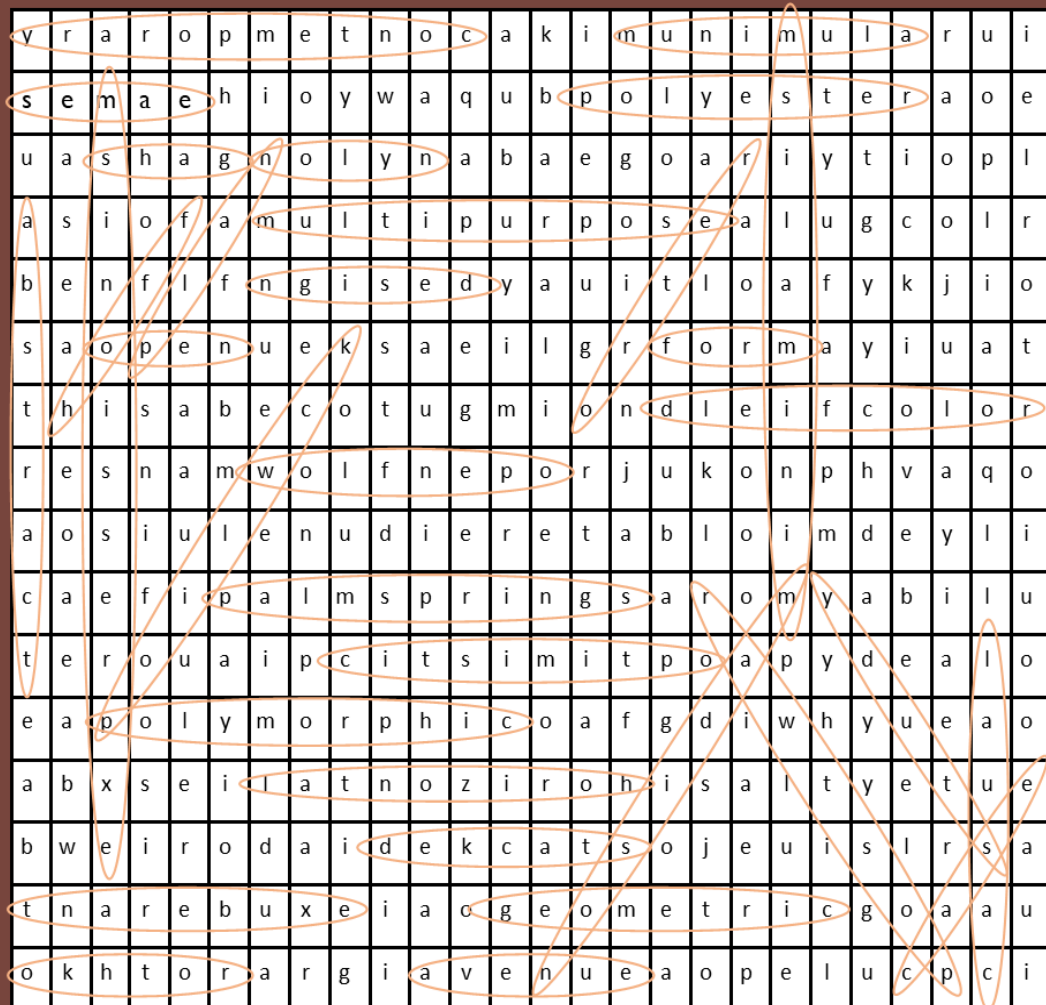
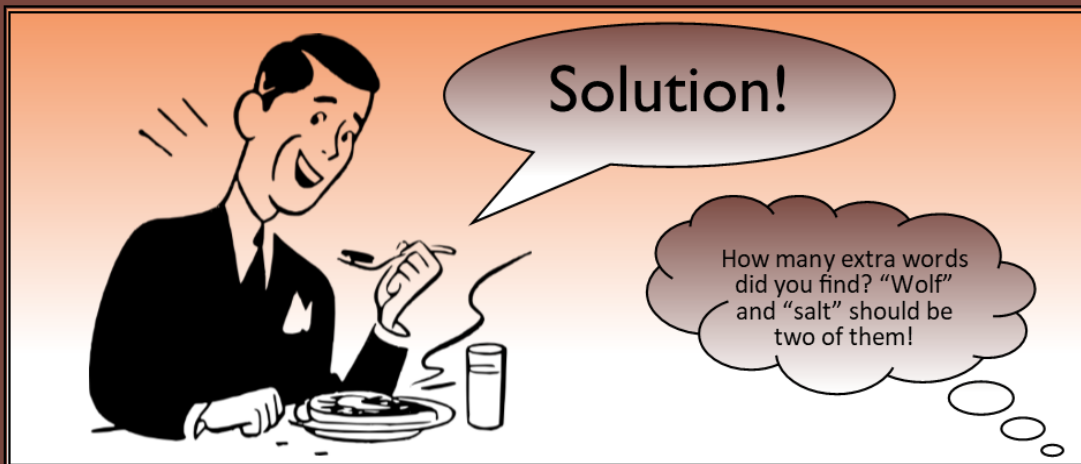
Word Search



Eames, postwar, Abstract Expressionism, Hoff, Rothko, Pollock, Madison Avenue, case study, minimalism, shag, open plan, color field, open flow, polymorphic, stacked, geometric, polyester, aluminum, nylon, Palm Springs, multipurpose, horizontal, casual, optimistic, exuberant, retro, form, design, contemporary (Can you find extra words?)

y	r	a	r	o	p	m	e	t	n	o	c	a	k	i	m	u	n	i	m	u	l	a	r	u	i
s	e	m	a	e	h	i	o	y	w	a	q	u	b	p	o	l	y	e	s	t	e	r	a	o	e
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o	k	h	t	o	r	a	r	g	i	a	v	e	n	u	e	a	o	p	e	l	u	c	p	c	i

Park Ranger A. Palmer





Word Search Extravaganza #5

Music!



violin, cello, bass, guitar, accordion, Hayden, band, note, Clair de lune, Debussy, Kindertotenlieder, Mahler, DJ, record, Flower Duet, jazz, Miles Davis, swing, beat, oboe, bassoon, Brahms, aria, piano, chord

A	I	O	Q	R	E	L	J	N	M	X	P	O	L	K	U	O	K	U	O	H	C	I	V	E	F
I	L	T	A	B	O	U	A	J	K	E	I	O	P	N	Y	R	A	J	N	R	O	P	Q	T	E
T	E	Q	A	F	L	O	W	E	R	D	U	E	T	O	A	E	P	G	A	I	U	Y	M	S	C
E	A	H	W	Y	I	E	O	P	J	K	L	I	C	R	I	L	N	O	I	D	R	O	C	C	A
G	E	B	A	N	D	A	H	A	Y	D	E	N	S	A	I	H	J	D	P	Y	S	E	A	I	Q
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I	E	W	A	U	O	R	I	E	L	M	I	U	S	L	A	D	O	A	P	M	J	R	E	G	I
W	A	N	M	A	L	E	N	O	O	S	S	A	B	H	A	L	R	M	I	R	A	T	I	U	G
S	E	S	D	A	L	I	U	G	I	M	R	F	P	E	T	B	D	O	B	O	E	T	U	A	O
O	A	M	I	L	E	S	D	A	V	I	S	J	U	O	D	R	O	H	C	A	S	I	O	P	R
U	O	M	A	E	C	L	A	I	R	D	E	L	U	N	E	A	Y	I	O	E	B	A	S	S	A
L	U	O	S	D	K	I	N	D	E	R	T	O	T	E	N	L	I	E	D	E	R	A	B	I	Z
M	A	H	T	A	E	S	O	U	T	F	I	P	G	N	U	E	I	K	A	I	N	O	P	E	Z
B	A	P	C	H	O	A	T	U	M	P	T	Y	U	I	A	H	P	T	U	K	P	Y	E	T	A
D	A	V	G	H	I	S	E	L	O	R	A	Y	W	M	I	O	R	E	C	M	K	I	A	D	J

Solution:



A	I	O	Q	R	E	L	J	N	M	X	P	O	L	K	U	O	K	U	O	H	C	I	V	E	F
I	L	T	A	B	O	U	A	J	K	E	I	O	P	N	Y	R	A	J	N	R	O	P	Q	T	E
T	E	Q	A	F	L	O	W	E	R	D	U	E	I	O	A	E	P	G	A	I	U	Y	M	S	C
E	A	H	W	Y	I	E	O	P	J	K	L	I	C	R	I	L	N	O	I	D	R	O	C	C	A
G	E	B	A	N	D	A	H	A	Y	D	E	N	S	A	I	H	J	D	P	Y	S	E	A	I	Q
G	R	I	X	W	A	K	O	P	N	S	F	L	A	I	R	A	G	B	A	M	E	I	S	N	G
N	A	H	R	I	U	E	B	L	I	T	S	G	O	E	L	M	R	E	H	A	I	Y	U	A	E
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Word Search Extravaganza #4

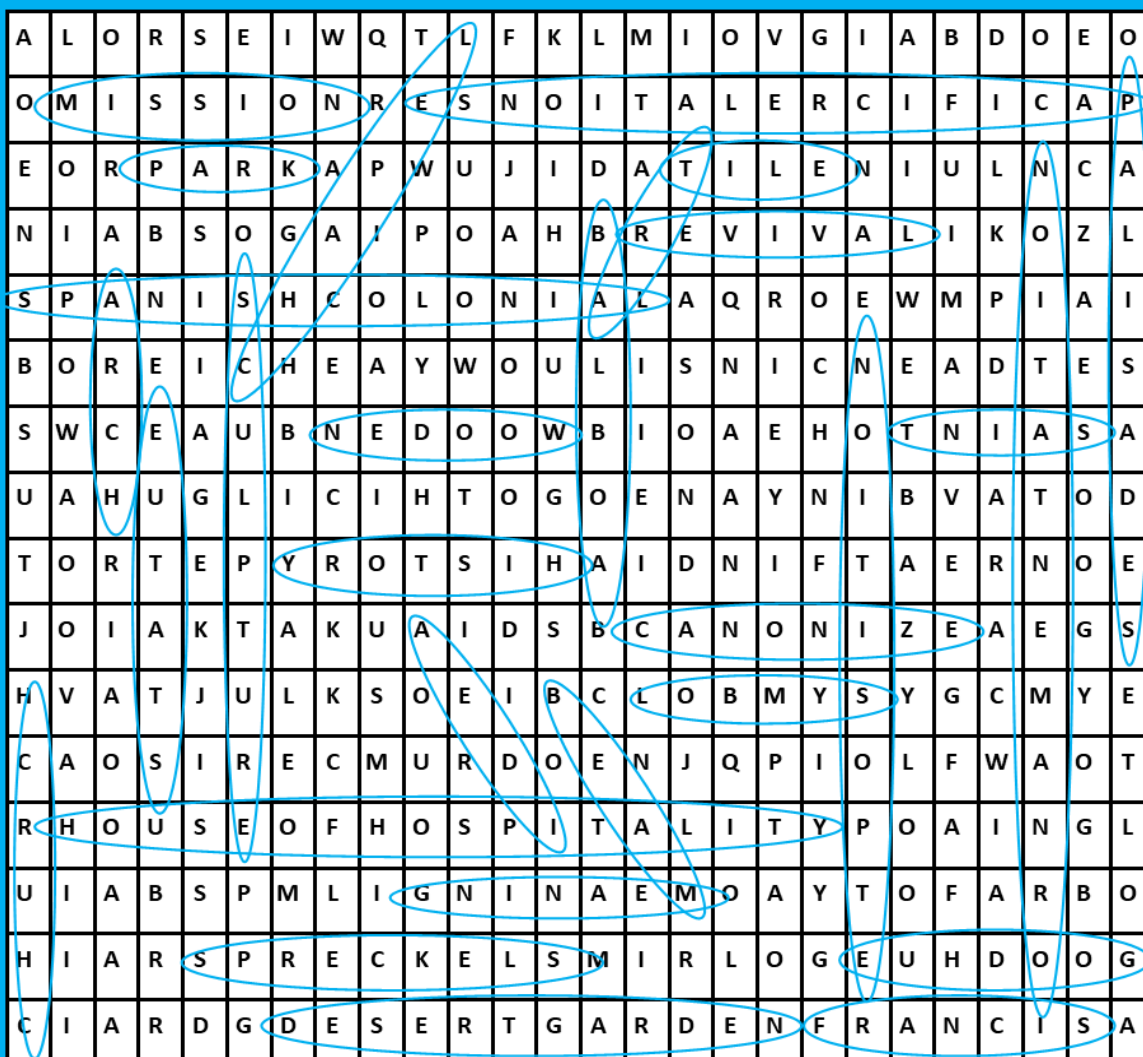
Balboa Park

Architecture

Spanish Colonial, Balboa, arch, sculpture, beam, wooden, neo-gothic, revival, Goodhue, tile, chapel, Francis, exposition, craft, art, symbol, church, idea, meaning, park, mission, saint, canonize, history, statue, ornamentation, Spreckels, Palisades, House of Hospitality, Pacific Relations, Desert Garden

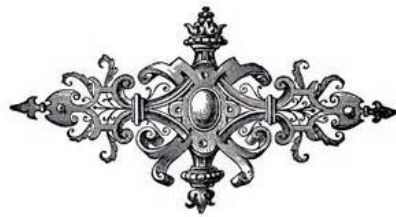
A	L	O	R	S	E	I	W	Q	T	L	F	K	L	M	I	O	V	G	I	A	B	D	O	E	O
O	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	R	E	S	N	O	I	T	A	L	E	R	C	I	F	I	C	A	P
E	O	R	P	A	R	K	A	P	W	U	J	I	D	A	T	I	L	E	N	I	U	L	N	C	A
N	I	A	B	S	O	G	A	I	P	O	A	H	B	R	E	V	I	V	A	L	I	K	O	Z	L
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U	A	H	U	G	L	I	C	I	H	T	O	G	O	E	N	A	Y	N	I	B	V	A	T	O	D
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H	I	A	R	S	P	R	E	C	K	E	L	S	M	I	R	L	O	G	E	U	H	D	O	O	G
C	I	A	R	D	G	D	E	S	E	R	T	G	A	R	D	E	N	F	R	A	N	C	I	S	A

Solution:



Folio Six

Topics for Park Professionals



PARK Design Basics



Topics for Park Professionals

#2

Garden Design

Park Design

Online Resources

Research Methods

The Garden

Nothing enlivens the heart and refreshes the mind like the presence of a cheerful landscape. One may find hours of enjoyment amid flowers of the season and manicured trees. In short, we realize quite well that the outdoor environment is salubrious in many ways. And yet, what often remains a mystery is how to design such spaces by making good use of the elevation and native plants at hand. Options abound. With this in mind, we will examine some basic ideas of landscape design to see how they inform the creation of public parks. To accomplish this, we will review theories and methods from the *Garden Visit* website and “Basic Park Design Information” from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. By examining design issues, from aesthetics to technical requirements, we can derive an understanding of how to transform our landscapes into places of enduring beauty.

From antiquity, to the modern age, gardens have been cultivated to offer grace and repose. The most fabled early examples of the art form arose in ancient Babylon and Persia, the former with its hanging gardens, and the latter with its intricate irrigation systems. To this day, the great ingenuity of these ancient builders remains noteworthy. More than anything, they taught us the importance of design, the basic element of memorable landscapes. Now, with historical examples in mind, let’s examine “Guide to Design Theory and Methods” from *Garden Visit*, an insightful work demonstrating how designers have blended theory with useful applications down through the centuries. Let’s examine the motivation behind their work.

The human imagination has long sought to shape the land in artful ways, bringing, among other things, aesthetic charm to our times of leisure. Now, let’s consider some attributes of progressive garden design. The Arts and Crafts Movement—and the work of Gertrude Jekyll, in particular—offers a great deal of practical information, from theory to implementation.

Jekyll, known for her collaborations with architect Edwin Lutyens, defined the Arts and Crafts Movement with her “painterly approach” to flower design, which emphasized practical concerns of dimension and durability. As the designer of more than 400 English gardens, she is celebrated for her astute use of flower borders and applications of vibrant hues. From her work, we discover that a pleasure garden ought to be distinguished by vivid color, as well as a balanced assemblage of forms (*The Official Website of the Jekyll Estate*). We may well be astounded by the manor house of Upton Grey, and the Munstead Wood garden, wondering how Jekyll achieved such remarkable strokes of color and pleasing form. And the answer is very clear, even to the most inexperienced gardener; “artistic judgment, horticultural expertise,” and the chastening influences of trial and error do wonders (*Garden Visit* website, “Planting Design” page). But what can we hope to achieve when all is said and done?

Ultimately, you will wish to establish your garden as a haven from the noisy business of the world, a place where refreshment and beauty preside. The garden will enliven your weary mind, delighting you with atmosphere, brush-strokes of color, interludes of sun and the soothing repose of shade. And the key to its character consists in design. By way of theory and artistic judgment, one can organize a space of walkways, flowers and perennial greenery. Now, we can begin to think about how to transform a group of spaces in order to create a park. Let’s take the garden to another level and see how things unfold.

Park Design

The Park:

A System of Spaces

We have examined theories and practices associated with garden design, from the art of pursuing trial and error, to the skill of applying horticultural and aesthetic knowledge. Now, we can go a bit further by considering how cultivated spaces can be developed into landscaped parks. Let's begin by examining some basic park design information provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

After the vision of a new park has been articulated, a number of practical considerations must be addressed, the bulk of which should be presented in a written report. In the PDCNR example, the paper begins with a list of design issues: the constraints of space; facility orientation; surface drainage; parking; ADA requirements and playground safety. Each aspect of the new park must be aesthetically balanced while fulfilling all relevant safety requirements. Beyond these basic issues, however, we must consider how the pieces of the new project will form a unified whole. The park, after all, is a *system* of spaces, all of which must be well-suited to their specific roles. If drainage and irrigation systems fail in their respective duties, little can be done to support playgrounds and sports areas, gardens and wildlife habitat. With this in mind, we can begin to think of park design as a vehicle for integrating diverse and interdependent elements.

Now that we have a basic picture of how a park can be planned, from the gardens that beautify to the play areas that delight, let's examine a more specialized aspect of planning: the historic preservation site. If your design project happens to involve areas of historic or archeological significance, you will have a great deal to consider as you begin the planning process.

Organization & Resources



As a system of spaces, a park functions on a number of different administrative levels, each one allowing for the fulfillment of different needs and the allocation of unique services. In the area of historical preservation, you will find numerous agencies in place to address a broad scope of tasks. However, one main question will unite them: how can we maintain parkland while protecting historic buildings and seeing to the upkeep of monuments? With labor and insight, we can find definitive answers. But management theories abound, so let's narrow our focus by inquiring into specific case studies. First, we will consider how the state of New York organizes its objectives and agencies.

The various projects are overseen by a single division, itself comprised of four parts. In short, the Historic Preservation Division manages the following:

The Bureau of Historic Sites
The Historic Preservation Field Services
The NYS Heritage Area System
Heritage Trails

The Bureau of Historic Sites administers buildings and landscapes, while providing curatorial services, collections management and archaeological project administration. The field service group works with communities and individuals to help identify and protect important cultural resources. As for specific sites of interest, the Heritage Area System serves to organize and present (in proper context) an array of cultural landmarks. Those wishing to explore historic sites can make use of Heritage Trails, a system of beautiful walkways designed for visitors who prefer self-guided journeys. Choices abound.

Now that we have some ideas about administration, let's examine how all the pieces of park operation can fit together.

Applied Theory

*turns parkland
into a place of beauty
and enjoyment.*

Basics

As mentioned previously, successful park design must embrace practical considerations—such as facility orientation, drainage and parking—as well as aesthetics and functionality. Add to this set of requirements the requisite administrative support, and you have quite a multifaceted task to address. How can all of these important items be understood and managed? Historic preservation parks show us how a complex system of spaces can be integrated, from the design of administrative agencies to the interface offered to visitors. Now, apart from the design and administrative concerns we have touched upon, what are some remaining issues? The case of Westergasfabriek Park, discussed on the *Garden Visit* website, offers a unique challenge.

Imagine entering the grounds of beautiful park, replete with brushstrokes of perennial flower gardens, trails, interpretive guides, ample parking and nary a hint of poor drainage. You can move through an array of archaeological sites and historic buildings with ease. Without a doubt, this is the ideal scenario, a dream accomplishment for any park designer. However, one problem remains outstanding: where are the benches and shade trees? At Westergasfabriek, in Amsterdam, they are lacking. So, the design flaw of this park highlights the importance of creating ample rest areas in conjunction with unique gardens and interpretive sites. How can we organize these elements to engage visitors and address their practical concerns? There are no easy answers.

When designing a park, one must recall that each patron will have a different reason for visiting. Some will stroll casually through gardens. In contrast, others may wish to find leisure for their children and a well-stocked concession stand. In any event, planners must, as best they can, attempt to anticipate the needs of visitors by designing spaces with purpose in mind. At Westergasfabriek, something of a postmodern ethos is in evidence; it is considered a “gas factory culture park,” which, at its best, presents industrial output as an attraction. But at its worst, it offers patrons few places to rest. Insightfully, the planner was able to create two focal points in her design of the park: a water axis and a cultural axis, the former creating something of a context for the latter. And yet, visitors were often unable to find suitable picnic and rest areas, thereby rendering Westergasfabriek more of a cultural area of curiosity than a place of leisure and recreation. Keeping this in mind, designers may wish to decide at a project’s inception how spaces will be defined. Is your park going to be a preservation site, a recreational facility, or a context for public

education? If you aspire to all three, how will each space relate to those surrounding it? Planning is key.

The work process is two-fold: administrators and park designers define a system of spaces and then propose the infrastructure necessary for support. As we have seen, from the initial report, to the planning of historic preservation and visitor attractions, the process can be very intricate. Examples from the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources, the state of New York, and Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam, offer a few ideas about how to address your task list with clarity and creativity.

Building the Future



What does the future of park design hold? Most professionals agree that issues of preservation, sustainability and stewardship are of primary importance, bringing into question exactly how we are to develop agencies and allocate resources to meet these requirements. To address these concerns, “Redefined Design Principles” were articulated at the 2008 *Designing the Parks* Conference in Sausalito, California. Designers were encouraged to: “Respect Place,” “Engage All,” “Model Sustainability,” “Design Beyond Boundaries,” and “Communicate Clearly.” Will visitors be able to enjoy radically transformed spaces in local parks and historic sites? Catchphrases are far easier to compose than they are to implement. However, with a goal of bringing new ideas to fruition, the conference generated an engaging reading list, a resource for all who enjoy parks. Of particular interest to open space enthusiasts is *Mountains Without Handrails* by Joseph Sax. Although it was published in 1980, the questions it raises are still of great importance to designers. How can we preserve parks while rendering them accessible to the public? Visit the *Designing the Park* website to learn more.

Defined Spaces

render parks

more functional and

aesthetically pleasing.

Allison M. Pabner

ONLINE RESOURCES

Enter the following addresses or keywords into your search engine:

Gardenvisit.com (The Garden and Landscape Guide)

***The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Resources**

***Landscaping Network**

***Landscaping Ideas Online**

***National Association for Olmsted Parks**



"Design Guidelines and Standards"
(from Overland Park in Kansas)

"Fort Carson's Landscaping Master Plan"

"City of Nanaimo Parks Department 2005 Parks Horticulture Survey"

Frederick Law Olmsted (website)

"History of Landscape Architecture"
(University of Oregon Department of Landscape Architecture)

Research

Methods and Ideas

Numerous issues attend the creation of parks and gardens, details which must be grasped if a project is to be successful. Although the rigors of planning are considerable, a strong research strategy may help to resolve many potential complications. Let's identify some helpful resources for your current design projects.

At the inception of any undertaking, one does well to consult the wisdom of the past. So, visit the case studies library of the **Landscape Institute**, a wonderful online resource for research and professional education. If historic preservation is of interest to you, consider reading the study entitled, "Seeing the History in the

View." This project addresses the issue of how the view of an historic site shapes our experience of it. If you are a professional, or a concerned park patron, case study research will enrich and inform your perspective. In the "View" project, we are taught how to create development proposals with historic environments in mind. In other words, planners must learn how to preserve cultural resources while presenting them to the public.

The case study shows just how much of a challenge it is to accomplish this while maintaining the landscape's view. Beyond the resources of the Landscape Institute, you can learn more about case study research from the "Resources" page of the *Designing the Park* website. Just enter the keywords into your browser.

For more in-depth research, you may wish to find a library dedicated to the subject of landscape architecture. The Penn State library system has just such a resource available. A set of research guidelines is available online, a listing which includes information on picture and image resources, design drawings and rules of thumb for design standards, a plethora of information

and inspiration.

After you have explored resources and concepts, you may wish to compile a general outline to organize your information. Begin by making some initial notes about your project, taking care to define the full scope of its purpose. Are you designing a space that resembles a number of existing locations? If so, you may wish to consult existing templates and make use of them, bearing in mind that you will need to consider the unique qualities of the land you are developing. Also, remember that your treatment of cultural resources, as well as your handling of preservation and sustainability issues, may be of interest to other professionals. At the conclusion of your project, you may wish to archive your innovations for posterity.

Now you have ample information available to help define a project, develop an outline and write a report. Additional resources can be found at your local university library. New research is always being conducted, so you will find a wealth of ideas.

Enjoy the experience of creating new gardens and parks. Your efforts will serve future generations well!

Exploring Our Heritage

At the Library of Congress



Topics for park
Professionals
#3

Introduction

Call Numbers

Applications

A Remarkable Institution

For park professionals, the Library of Congress is a wonderful resource, containing, as it does, a vast array of materials on the conservation, care and mapping of our nation's wild and urban lands. In this issue, we will explore the library's contents and note a few useful research tips. Whether you are searching for educational material for a park program, or simply browsing for ideas, the Library of Congress is a brilliant resource. Let's begin with a look at its rich history.

The website provides a narrative of the institution's inception, beginning with the act of Congress that founded it in 1800. Under the direction of President John Adams, it was decided that a library "containing such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress" would serve the new government well. Clearly, his aspirations for the nascent institution were modest. Today, the library is "an unparalleled world resource" with more than "35 million cataloged books." A detailed account of the library's most prized holdings can be found in *Treasures of the Library of Congress*, a photographic history by Charles A. Goodrum and Edith M. Pavese.

We are justified in calling this institution a national treasure. And, as such, we may well regard it as a center of knowledge that speaks to our country's ideals. However, the vast amount of information is only useful to the extent that it is organized. Let's take a closer look.

Upon visiting the homepage, you will find an array of digital media categories. A statement of the library's mission—along with links to *American Memory*, *Sound Recordings*, *Performing Arts*, *Manuscripts and Veterans' History*—will be the first. Now, let's delve a bit deeper into the organization of material.

More than anything, the Library of Congress is known as a system of classification, the scope of which is noteworthy. From the "General Outline" link, we find subject headings for philosophy, psychology, the history of the Americas, law, education, music, and naval science, to name but a handful. However, the main issue at hand pertains to navigating the information. So, for an example of how the system works, we will conduct a search for cartography materials.

Begin by typing "Library of Congress Classification Outline" into your web browser. This will be the most direct route. Then, click the link marked "Classification" in order to reach the "Classification and Shelf Listing" page. To the left, you will find a search field. Enter "subclass G" in order to obtain the "Cataloging and Acquisitions Search Results." At the very top of the page, you will find a link for "Special Instructions and Tables of Subdivisions for Cartographic Materials." Although this may seem like a wearisome process, mastering a few search procedures will unveil a world of information. In the cartographic section alone, you will discover a vast amount of information about the geographic features of our nation. As a park professional, you will find this resource to be quite useful. The materials—as noted in the "Special Instructions" section—are divided in a very intuitive manner and are provided in a PDF format for convenience.

Call Number Construction

Area Sub-arrangements

Subject Sub-arrangements

Prior to studying the instructions, keep in mind that the Library of Congress classification method differs from that of the Dewey Decimal System. Whereas the Dewey structure organizes subjects from 000 to 900, the Library of Congress classifies subjects under A through Z headings with numerous sub-classifications that offer increasing levels of detail.

Call Number Construction

The first category you will see pertains to atlases. Here, you will find information on area maps, and related electronic resources, clearly divided into categories of major atlases/sub-area atlases and major area maps/sub-area maps. Now, in order to help you locate information, let's take a look at the numbers you will find described in this document. For example, the area number of the "Major area atlas" category is G1250, which corresponds to New York State. The sub-area under this pertains to New York counties and is listed as G1253. The number directly under it is a "cutter" number that corresponds to the authority responsible for creating the atlas. Below this, you will find the date of publication. Although this may seem a bit complicated, the sheer extent of holdings renders detailed organization necessary. As new subclasses are designed, the website will provide users with notes and instructions. Below, you will find a call number sample divided by section.

G1250 New York State (area number)

.D4 (Cutter number for the agency that produced the work)

2000 (date of publication)

You will find ample materials to investigate. In order to maximize your research time, you may wish to read all the available instructions and *design notes* at the outset. Now, let's examine a set of materials which may help you to find new research topics.

Newspapers & Books

How quaint it may seem to flip through the yellowing pages of a newspaper, smearing ink and catching the fragrance of old paper as you proceed. Not long ago, if one wished to keep up with topics of the day, this was the primary medium. Thankfully, the old papers that described pivotal events, such as world wars and presidential elections, have been preserved for posterity.

Enter "Library of Congress Historic Newspapers" into your web browser to begin your journey. You will find a listing of newspapers that were distributed 100 years ago to the day, quite an exciting bit of primary source material. My search has yielded front page news from *The Washington Herald*, *The Harlowton News*, and (the) *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, a plethora of historic sources. Notice, there is an option to

scroll from one side to another. This will yield additional titles, *The Central Record* and *St. John's Review*, among them. These search results hearken back to the time when multiple newspapers presented a variety of viewpoints to the reading public, by way of morning and evening editions.

The Library of Congress digital format provides a number of useful features for researchers. To begin with, each newspaper entry can be magnified to the desired size, making it easy to read articles and study the peculiarities of old illustrations and photographs. Everything from news of a society wedding, and the state of the 1913 automotive industry, to advertisements for high-button boots, can be found within these pages of history. Now that we have an idea of what awaits our discovery, let's examine the full range of resources and consider how best to utilize them.

Scroll to the very top of the newspaper page. There you will find a few notes about the "Chronicle America" project, and the various endowments sustaining it, as well as a button for the newspaper directory, a collection dating from 1690 to the present day. Search parameters will allow you to locate items based on where and when they were published, the type of press producing them, frequency of publication, and the method of preservation. For those wishing to study primary source materials, the Library of Congress offers a wealth of resources, the substance of which preserves our national heritage. Owing to the vast amount of information available, consider exploring the newspaper collection by way of "Topics in Chronicle America," a selection of topic pages sorted by alphabetical listing, subject categories, and date ranges. If you are curious about topics recently added to the index listed above, the library offers a weekly update service, a subscription for those wishing to remain abreast of current events. Whether you are conducting focused research, or simply exploring the resources at hand, the newspaper index is sure to be of great interest. With this in mind, you may wonder about how the program began.

Recognizing the needs of posterity, the National Digital Newspaper program partnered with the National Endowment for the Humanities to create databases and practical search parameters. The goal of the program—and the focus of all monetary awards associated with it—involves expanding the number of states and newspapers represented by the project, a task which will likely extend into the foreseeable future. In 2014, great strides were made in furthering this goal, as 800,000 newspaper pages—spanning from 1836 to 1922—were added to the index. Now, researchers will find a wealth of offerings from Indiana and North Dakota, as well as French and Spanish language papers from Arizona, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas (LOC website). A brief survey of these resources reminds us of the importance of daily news publications. Consider how interesting our spending habits, styles of dress, and economic theories will be to future generations. Thanks to the LOC, they will be able to explore our world in great detail.

As you have seen from our brief overview of the newspaper database available online, the Library of Congress organizes and presents a staggering array of historical resources. Now, we will examine the issue of maintaining historical documents.

The Library of Congress plays a number of primary and secondary roles in the drama of collecting, preserving, and presenting historical materials; it is a vast repository, as well as a system of classification for all of our nation's major publications. Now, with publishing in mind, let's consider one of the main formats we use to record and transmit the ideas of our culture: the book, a staple of our civilization. And yet, however important its history may be, change is in the air; in this age of digital media, we can easily forget the huge role books have played in shaping and edifying our culture, granting us, in no small measure, a sense of who we are and where we might be headed. Considering this, we can appreciate what the library has undertaken in order to celebrate books.

Back in 1977, the library established The Center of the Book in order to promote literacy and preserve the literary heritage of our nation. Helping us to appreciate books as artifacts, and examine their role in communication and recordkeeping, the center has presented numerous programs over the years. So important was this mission that, in 1984, the Center for the Book was introduced as an affiliate agency in all 50 states, making the transmission of literary heritage a priority. Of particular interest, is the "Books & Beyond" series, a program which brings authors to the center to discuss their work and their use of the library's vast resources. But regardless of how enriching such events may be, little has been gained if the books themselves are lost to the rigors of time. To address the issue of preserving books, the LOC website offers a host of useful tips for book lovers. If you find this subject to be of interest, read the page devoted to the "National Preservation Research Agenda." As practicing scholars, staff members publish their research to enrich the wider scientific community. From research on the impact of solvents on paper, to studies on artifactual value and the scope of conservation issues, numerous topics are explored and made available to the public. If you love books, you will enjoy reading about current research and analytical projects on the LOC website. Going a bit further with this theme, let's take a look at the Preservation Research and Testing Division.

If you have ever been curious about the longevity of book paper, or wondered if your digital media items will span the generations, preservation research will be of great relevance to you. Studies on paper permanence, as well as issues surrounding adhesive behavior and deacidification, are routinely examined by staff.

Although it takes a great deal of effort to preserve our print and digital media for future generations, the task is being well-executed by numerous researchers and curators at the LOC. The website offers a staggering array of information for those who are interested, in addition to providing extensive indexes of books, maps, audio pieces and newspapers. As a park professional, you will find vast resources on parkland and numerous ideas for research projects. Consider how much the LOC has to offer the next time you need to prepare a report, or develop interpretive programs for your park.

Preparing to Write



The Research Centers

The library has organized its information into a vast series of research centers, an array of well-ordered repositories that will be of great use to you. If you wish to obtain information online, enter "overview of all Library of Congress research centers" into your browser. You will find a detailed entry for each center, listing the materials to be found within the reading room in question. Now, think for a moment of how useful this resource is for students, scholars and inquisitive citizens alike. Where would you like to begin?

Although a wide range of subjects is represented, one of the most fascinating by far belongs to the American Folklife Center. If you wish to discover our heritage through sound recordings, or study the history of occupational folk poetry—to name but two areas of emphasis—explore the library's research centers. Of particular interest will be the online webcast collection, which includes lectures, photographs, essays, and concerts. In addition to these offerings, you can explore the Mary Sheppard Burton collection of hooked rugs, if you have an interest in crafts. Beyond this, take some time to study war stories from the Veterans' History Project. And, when you are finished there, enjoy the library's vast collection of LP booklets, historic documents that chronicle a great expanse of American music.

Wherever your interests are, you will find a great deal of material in the research centers of the Library of Congress. Familiarize yourself with the vast number of online resources available, then plan your research trip.

A. M. Palmer

Electronic Resources

Balance Your Research Strategies



Enter the Following Keywords into Your Browser:	United States Legislative Information Search Tips
Association of College & Research Libraries (information competency)	Cartographic Research Online, the British Library
City College of San Francisco Online Library Skills Workshop	U of Alabama Map Library (online public access)
WorldCat Find a Library	Newspaper Archives Online
University of Illinois Glossary of Library Terms	A Brief History of Newspapers

Research Designs

Undoubtedly, the Library of Congress will spark your imagination, inspiring you to investigate a diverse array of subjects. However, there are a few practical considerations which may help you to organize the materials you need. Let's take a brief look at the subject of research designs. For this project, you may wish to consult *The Modern Researcher*, a classic study on the fundamentals of research and writing by Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff.

When creating a research design, begin with a general topic of interest. Then, gradually sharpen the focus, so you know which materials you will need to consult. For example, if American maps are of interest to you, perhaps you will wish to study early twentieth century mapping of our national parks. As you proceed, you will need to compile a bibliography of all the books and articles available on the subject. Then, after you read carefully though everything, list the research gaps you find.

For example, perhaps a number of works exist on certain regions, but very few—or even none—can be found for others. As you create your design, you may find that previous researchers either overlooked key areas of inquiry, or did not possess enough material to make useful progress. In any event, you will likely find a suitable niche as you read the published works in your field.

When you have completed your research design, you should have a good idea of where your efforts are most needed. In the process of reading and asking yourself questions—pertaining to the oversights of other researchers and the full extent of your own interest in the subject—you will find direction for your own books and articles.

In short, your preliminary work will involve finding a problem and determining an appropriate method of investigation; as you proceed, you will begin to discover what needs to be measured and how to accomplish the task. One of the most important aspects of this work will involve examining your audience. The way in which you present the problem, your methods of investigation, and your results will have a great deal to do with your audience and their needs.

For additional ideas, and an extensive amount of information, consult *The Modern Researcher* and enjoy the excitement of your investigation.

Bonus

Writing Prompts



The Mariana Trench

Deepest Region of the Ocean



Writing Prompts:

Plunging over 35,800 feet below the surface, the famed Mariana Trench is the deepest part of the ocean, serving as home to a variety of beautiful and terrifying creatures, the angler fish being one of the most eye-catching. Just east of the Mariana Islands, in the western Pacific, the trench has long captured the imagination of divers—who can only descend to around 320 feet—and those who pilot submersibles, the most famous of whom is director James Cameron. The BBC recently reported on his journey to the bottom of the trench, as he dove nearly seven miles into the black depths. Now, let's think about how this subject can provide us with useful writing exercises.

Remember, a writing prompt is a warmup exercise, akin to stretching before a run. So, don't worry about writing a great memoir or the next bestselling deep sea novel. Rather, I want you to focus on stretching your mind in new directions, and exploring ideas for the sheer fun of it, some of which may lead you to initiate new projects. Perhaps you are a diver who enjoys blogging and writing posts about your latest adventures. Let's see how the Mariana Trench can inspire you.

1) Consider the picture above, as you learn about this region of the ocean. Now, imagine that you are in a boat, floating over the trench, preparing for a dive to 65 feet, where you might expect to encounter shallow coral reefs and quite a few fish. How do you feel about the coming adventure? Are you excited or scared? Is this your first dive? Describe the scene in detail, from the gear you are using, to your companions and the weather conditions.

2) Although terrifying in appearance, the carnivorous angler fish is only 1 to 7 inches long, and found, not only in the depths of the trench, but also on continental shelves. Imagine that you are a new diver, preparing to enter waters where they are known to live. True, they are small, but their teeth are some of the sharpest found in nature. How do you feel about that? Tell us the story.

3) You have just entered the waters above the trench. You know that over 35,000 feet of dark waters wait below. Tell us your thoughts. Try to bring us into the moment when the magnitude of the trench first dawns on you.

For Further Reading:

The Mariana Trench website.
Here, you will find information on the region's biology, oceanography and ecosystem, along with the latest research.

Sullivan, Christine. *Breathtaking Chasms* (from the Natural Marvels Series) Chicago: World Book Inc, 2017.

Natural Wonders of the World.
The Smithsonian. New York: DK Publishing, 2017.

You can find information on the most famous explorer of the deep, Jacques Cousteau, at the Notable Biographies website.



The Coyote

Admired and Despised

Native to North America, the coyote is a predator you are likely to overlook, as you explore urban parks and canyons, the favored habitat of this elusive scavenger. An omnivore, the coyote can survive up to 14 years, lives in tightly-bonded packs (formed each winter for hunting), and ranges in weight from 20 to 50 pounds (*National Geographic* website). With its brown and gray coat, this canine can blend into any woodland area or canyon with ease, hunting effectively with the aid of its companions—as many cat owners know quite well. And being an omnivore certainly has its advantages. Willing to eat from fruit trees and the remnants of garbage, this creature is the very soul of successful adaptation, thriving in the shadow of our cities and farms. In short, the coyote is a feature of the human world, greatly admired for its cunning and adaptability, yet despised by ranchers and farmers who lose precious livestock to hunting packs. Now, let's consider how this animal can inspire writers to tell new stories about the natural world and its inhabitants.

Above all else, coyotes are masterful survivors, very much the heroes of their own story. Portrayed as tricksters in Native American lore, their yellow eyes peer through vegetation as packs prepare to snatch prey, deception and guile being very much a part of their operation. Failing that, speed is also on their side, coyotes being able to sprint at roughly 40 miles an hour. In folklore, this creature is often neither entirely good nor bad, just a sly opportunist who likes to play tricks on the unwary, perhaps resembling a picaresque protagonist, or the flâneur of French novels, a drifter who wanders the landscape in search of adventure. With the coyote, you have an anthropomorphic hero at your disposal, one you can develop into a nuanced character who exhibits noble as well as selfish motivations. Or, you can write about your encounters with these animals.

While walking in my neighborhood one evening, I passed a trailhead, just as shapes in the landscape were becoming amorphous pieces of darkness, and the sounds of night were growing louder. Then, I found myself confronted. The coyote was not especially large, and appeared to be alone, but it was bold and unwilling to retreat upon my approach. From there, an interesting story unfolded.

When writing with the coyote in mind, you can develop rich narratives of natural history and literature. Just imagine how it feels to stare into those yellow eyes.



Writing Ideas:

1) Try using the essay genre to tell your readers about coyote habitat and biology, incorporating stories of your own encounters with these animals. In this way, you can assume the role of naturalist, using storytelling as your backdrop. This approach is useful for creating blog pieces that edify readers with technical information while entertaining them.

2) Perhaps you have no harrowing tales of coyote encounters to share with your audience. No problem. Consider writing your own folktale, a narrative for adults or children. You can explore a wealth of Native American myths and legends for inspiration.

3) Consider the following prompt:

Dusk is beginning to transform the hillsides with soft hues of dayglow, delighting your senses and hinting at excitement. Just as you glance into the distance, you see a coyote, then two and several more. At this point, the atmosphere becomes silent and you begin to tremble. What happens next? Tell us the story.

For Further Reading:

Bright, William. *Coyote Stories*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press Journals, 2015.

Leydet, Francois. *Coyote: Defiant Songdog of the West*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.

Coyote Research Newsletter. The United States Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife; Fish and Wildlife Service.



Writing Prompts:

Even now, the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 stands as a brilliant achievement, an international event featuring glorious examples of temporary architecture, technological marvels of the time, and throngs of curious visitors. Not only was the fair magnificent, so also were the dramas of intrigue and murder that surrounded it, H. H. Holmes and Daniel Burnham being two of the main characters. Among other notables was Nikola Tesla, who exhibited his innovations to astounded onlookers. Chicago's plan to outshine Paris's exposition succeeded on a number of levels, with no shortage of excitement. Also known as the World's Columbian Exposition, the event was situated in Jackson Park and marked the 400th anniversary of Columbus's New World voyage. Fittingly, Frederick Law Olmsted was one of the designers, who, like his contemporaries, favored neo classical magnificence and the Beaux-Arts aesthetic. The venue was resplendent with symmetry. Let's allow a bit of Tesla's genius and Olmsted's vision to inspire our writing exercises. Consider the following:

- 1) It's a hot Chicago day, and you are in a gondola, approaching the columns of the building above. You are awestruck. But your reverie is interrupted by a small child, who tugs on your arm to ask what you are thinking. What do you tell her? How can you describe your amazement to a child? Tell us the story.
- 2) You are one of Olmsted's contemporaries, a friend who admires his work. However, even you are truly awestruck by the venue he helped to design. As you stroll the buildings pictured to the right, with Olmsted by your side, you express your impressions freely. What do you tell this designer of renown about his work? Feel free to let your imagination roam.
- 3) The people pictured to the right were dressed in their finest heavy, dark clothing for a day at the park. Imagine that they mysteriously wound up at a beach in California on July 4th, 2019. They were a bit overdressed and quite shocked at what they saw. I want you to tell us the story of their adventure.
- 4) If you explore the photos of this event, consider the elegance and detail of the architecture. Do these structures look temporary to you? If you enjoy history, perhaps you will wish to write an article about your impressions.

For Further Reading:

Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City*.
Leicester, England: Howes, 2003.

Curtis M. Hinsley and David R. Wilcox.
*Coming of Age in Chicago: The 1893 World's
Fair and the Coalescence of American
Anthropology*. Lincoln: University of
Nebraska Press, 2016.

The World's Fair, Chicago 1893 website.
Here, you will find a detailed history of the
event, its culture, and the surrounding drama.



Habitat Management in City Parks

Thoughts for Writers

City park rangers face a variety of unique land management tasks, endeavors specific to the urban environment. Here, we will consider a few of them from the essayist's perspective. Indeed, this subject is important for nonfiction writers to consider.

The greenspaces city rangers oversee are, quite often, areas of mitigation, cultivated to offset housing developments and restore urban habitat. Along these lines, each large city is likely to have a habitat management plan, objectives for the long-term protection of natural resources. In San Diego, we have the Multiple Species Conservation Program. If you live elsewhere, I encourage you to research the plan for your region. For the moment, however, we will digress to focus on the role that essayists can play documenting local park environments.

From John Muir to Aldo Leopold and Barry Lopez—to name but a few—we find essayists venturing into nature to comment on the history of the land, documenting their impressions and discoveries along the way. Wild splendor is certainly worthy of such attention. But what about the trails and greenspaces of downtown parks? What about local beaches teeming with sunbathers? These areas are no less worthy of the writer's attention. In fact, city parks and beaches are desperately in need of the essayist's work. With this in mind, let's take a moment to consider some writing projects.

1) You can learn about your region's habitat management plan with a bit of online research. From there, you can write to local politicians and conservation groups to express your concerns. However, prior to that, you can begin by keeping a journal of your city park explorations. By photographing plants and flowers, you can study the native species of your area, and learn to differentiate them from invasive vegetation. By maintaining a journal for a number of seasons, you can create your own record of changes in the land. From there, you can articulate questions and concerns about local management plans, and offer your own solutions. As a nature writer, you have a wide scope of influence.

2) You can also consider building a memoir around your observations of the city parks you visit. Tell readers about your thoughts and the events of your life, using your local park as a backdrop. The trails you explore daily will provide you with great inspiration.

Lemonade Berry, San Diego, CA

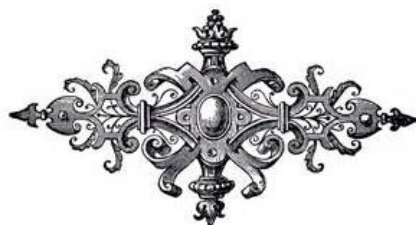


Resources:

- Visit the City of San Diego website for information on the Multiple Species Conservation Program (sandiego.gov).
- For detailed information regarding endangered and sensitive species, as well as issues related to climate and habitat, the U. S. Geological Survey maintains vast datasets, region by region.
- The California Native Plant Society (www.cnps.org) is a wonderful resource for park enthusiasts, gardeners, and students of the natural world.
- The California Botanic Garden (located in Claremont, California) has long been a favorite destination for locals.
- The UC Davis Botanical Conservatory contains specimens from around the world, and is a wonderful place for research.
- The papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, park planner and landscape architect, can be viewed on the Library of Congress website.
- If you would like to delve into the papers of John James Audubon, visit Houghton Library (Harvard College Library). This is Harvard's main repository for rare books and manuscripts. You can email them.
- You can also check your local historical society to see if they maintain records on the founding of city parks.

Folio Seven

Exploring the Archives Series



Exploring the San Diego History Center

The Chain of Blue: A Journal Published for Lovers of the Best in Photoplays

1919 to 1920

A.M. Palmer, Park Ranger

Balboa Park



In a previous installment, we had a wonderful opportunity to meet Jane Kenealy, archivist of the San Diego History Center. The interview provided me with a new perspective on what an archivist does, from one busy day to the next, organizing and preserving the things of regional history, celebrating the rich heritage of local families, and fulfilling numerous administrative duties. Their endeavors are fascinating and detail-oriented. More than that, however, archival staff work tirelessly to assist with research, making precious materials available to scholars, as well as members of the general public. And this is where the focus of my article series is to be found; I'm interested in what a visit to the archives might yield, in the absence of a planned research project. Why not simply explore the many things available, with the guidance of archival staff, and see what comes of it? A bit of spontaneity might reveal some exciting things. So, let's see where the journey leads.

On my first visit, I wondered where I might really begin. There truly is a vast amount of material available, from photographs and old maps to documents of every variety, not to mention the storied signature of Abraham Lincoln. The possibilities seem endless. However, since my goal is to begin researching something random, see where it leads, and then reflect on its connection to San Diego history—for enjoyment rather than deep scholarship—I thought it best to start with something a bit quirky and unexpected. And, really, nothing says fun like *ephemera*.

Event posters and campaign buttons from yesteryear, record jackets and pamphlets—items which were intended for brief use, but somehow wound up being preserved in an archival collection—call out to be rediscovered. In short, history often relies on ephemeral things, odds and ends which somehow survive being discarded—remaining intact, by chance, to bear witness to a different time. This will be a great place to begin our journey.

To begin, Samantha Mills, a staff member of the Collections Department, printed out a list of the “Ephemera Collection” for me, including: “Scope and Content,” “Arrangement” and “Series Descriptions.” With this comprehensive list to guide me, I soon felt whimsical and decided to explore the boxes devoted to theatre arts. Needless to say, this field of endeavor has brought us some of the most extraordinary characters known to history, on and off stage. Little did I know, however, that I was not going to delve into stage history, but something called “photoplays,” an old term for motion pictures.

Although it's hard for us to imagine a time before celebrities and fandom, widespread fame for film actors was a novelty, during the early twentieth century, and probably seemed odd to ordinary people. But exciting stories were certainly nothing new, even then. Tales of love and untimely death have delighted audiences for centuries, connecting people to a sense of morality, religious faith, and the idea of what it means to be human. Great storytelling has always been popular. Long before the reign of motion pictures, Charles Dickens initiated his career by publishing fiction in installments, often keeping readers in suspense for weeks on end. But the idea of watching characters in moving photos—accompanied by written dialogue and musical scores—was new in 1919, a risky business venture for early producers. But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself. Let me refocus on the archival materials at hand.

No sooner had Samantha retrieved a box for me than something fascinating caught my eye: a folder containing a pair of red book boards, bearing frayed tape and typed labels. Between the boards were old copies of *The Chain of Blue*, a weekly periodical from Bush Theatres and the Broadway Amusement Company, dated from 1919 to 1920. It was an exciting thing to discover.

“A Journal Published for Lovers of the Best in Photoplays,” the title promoted a new art form and the industry developing around it. *The Chain* was certainly a very important publication. Would silent movies actually appeal to the public? Producers were creating something unparalleled and highly innovative, but risky. If they hoped to succeed, their new periodical would have to convince San Diegans to purchase movie tickets, in droves. Of course, we all know how things worked out for the film industry. But in 1919, it was not a foregone conclusion that flickering images, trite storylines, and questionable acting skills would turn a consistent profit. There was always a chance that the appeal would wear thin.

What came to mind, as I looked at the worn pages of the magazine, was the question of how this strange novelty—pictures moving in harmony with organ music—could have become so popular. One could say that it was an idea whose time had come. And yet, it was considerably more than that. Making movies involved combining art with business acumen, launching a new product into the arms of a receptive audience. How would early producers succeed in this complex task? It was crucial for them to understand how average citizens received information, and then use that knowledge to inspire interest in the new product. Today, we simply call it marketing. However, this aspect of modern life was just coming to the fore in those days. Perhaps I’ll delve into its history at another time. For the moment, what interests me is the role of early marketing ventures, like the one developed for silent films, and the extent to which they relied on people’s reading habits. During that era, without the written word, you would have lacked both news and entertainment.

In 1919, newspapers kept everyone in touch with world events, national news and the exploits of local politicians. Dailies were often read aloud to family members and friends, with a sense of anticipation and excitement. Who won a recent election? Would there be war? At that time, people wanted a fresh printed page in their hands as regularly as possible. So, with that expectation in mind, Bush Theatres produced a promotional magazine every week, filled with enticing ads about new photoplays and their all-star casts. Glowing articles were devoted to Will Rogers and Norma Talmadge, two prominent figures of the age. At this point in movie history, it was important to inform everyone of who the stars actually were, since people living in smaller cities and rural areas might not know about the actors and films being promoted, or, knowing, might not really care. Audience apathy was not an option. Bush had to keep *The Chain of Blue* coming, as quickly as people could read it and rush to his theatres. In so doing, he was creating a different sort of news periodical, one which would establish the *idea* of stardom, and underwrite the aspirations of a new and formidable industry. A huge change was underway.



As I look at the first issue, carefully handling those red book boards, I think of how amazing this fan magazine really is, as a piece of history. On the day it was first received by an eager reader, John Wayne was still a boy, and had yet to storm the *Sands of Iwo Jima*. Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh were also very young, *Gone with the Wind* and their halcyon days still to come. The industry was brand new, all those years ago, and hundreds of stars had yet to emerge into their glory. For me, this creates a powerful sense of time and historical relevance. More than movie history is important to remember, however, as I study the remnants of this fascinating and tumultuous period. The “war to end all wars” had cast a long shadow over the world, and the future seemed at once bleak and rife with staggering potential. A new era was coming into its own.

By the end of June, 1919, the Allied Powers hoped that the Treaty of Versailles might bring about a lasting peace. The advance of mechanized combat had devastated the nations, raising difficult questions about the future. And, in addition to the Great War, the Spanish Influenza had claimed millions. Sometimes, when looking back on the good old days, we forget that the early years of the twentieth century were terrifying; war and revolution toppled the old regimes, as a pandemic raged. People must have wondered just how bad things would get. Perhaps this was indeed the ideal time for movies to gain prominence and soothe the population. At any rate, I’m going to digress for a moment, to recall a bit of my own family history.

Just prior to *The Chain of Blue* marketing campaign, my grandmother was in a small town in Louisiana, beginning to recover from the dreaded flu, emerging from what everyone believed would be her deathbed. She had beaten the odds, and survived the pandemic, as her brothers returned from the trenches of Europe, alive but forever changed—this, just as the entertainment industry was beginning to flourish. As I think about it, certain historical events—and remembrances from my own family—provide me with a powerful context for this silent film magazine. Without a doubt, the world was changing rapidly, and so were the needs and lives of the public. These pages, of a fleeting and now forgotten movie periodical, were something of a herald. This is why I love archives.



Romance of the Age

History truly becomes exciting when we can connect it to our own families, whether our ancestors were prominent figures, or ordinary shopkeepers and farmers, waiting for sons to return from distant battlefields. The past, like the present, is rife with complex activities and relationships. With this in mind, I find myself wanting to learn more about the key players in the silent film world of San Diego. Who was behind *The Chain of Blue*? What were their goals? To answer these questions, we must go back and examine the Broadway Amusement Company. So, Samantha retrieved their articles of incorporation for me, and I considered the scope of the organization.

Signed and sealed into existence on January 14, 1915, by Ben Harrison, G.A. Bush and J. Weinberger, the articles provide us with useful information. Article (A) reads:

To engage in the theatre business, and in that connection to conduct, maintain and operate moving picture houses, theatres and other places of amusement, and to manufacture, produce, exhibit and distribute moving pictures, moving picture films, and all rights and appurtenances connected therewith and pertaining thereto.

Further articles note that the company was also organized to acquire property, lease it, and execute banking functions, in accordance with their entertainment ventures. Clearly, San Diego was poised to be more than the poor relation of Hollywood. In addition, the articles of incorporation reveal how a movie magazine could, at least in theory, fit into a larger entertainment business plan as a powerful marketing tool. It was a stroke of genius. Using the printed page, to launch the fledgling silent film industry, would establish the *reading* public as the future *viewing* public. At the dawn of a new century, the Broadway Amusement Company was positioned to bring about great changes in San Diego, using their magazine as a key device.

The first silent films marked a transition between live theatre and the postwar motion picture industry—the behemoth of financial power and social influence that we know today. And, in a fascinating way, *The Chain of Blue* was a powerful agent of change assisting that process, emerging as a combination news periodical and fan magazine. It was an ambitious editorial policy, to say the least. A casual glance reveals that there was a lot going on with this publication: publicity articles, short fiction, editorial comments, news, advertisements, and glamorous photos of actors. The editorial slant of the magazine was just as lively and multifaceted as the photoplays being offered. But even beyond all of this, I noticed something truly fascinating.

To keep audiences clamoring for matinee tickets, *The Chain of Blue* employed an interesting tactic. Editors chose to adopt something of a metaphysical outlook, stressing the idea that *experiencing* emotion was essential for furthering human progress. By extension, movie patronage was not only an amusement but a means of advancing humanity. Consider the following passage from “Emotions,” featured in the Thursday, June 19, 1919 issue:

Yes, hunger of our emotions keeps us forever striving for a new sensation with which to appease them. And this is well, for it means an ever forward movement of the whole human race toward better things, an ever widening horizon mentally, physically and spiritually.

If people were uncertain as to where their meager discretionary funds should go, this essay made it clear, at least from the theatre promoters’ perspective. Somehow, motion picture attendance could link the individual patron to a higher calling, creating momentum of a mental, physical and spiritual nature. By implication, however, failure to participate might leave one outside of this new movement, sadly famished for art and human progress.

Music, literature and art have long been considered the most satisfying food for emotion, and there is no gainsaying the fact that we could not get on without them.

But there is a form of art that has reached a perfection that makes it the supreme and universally popular sustenance of the emotions. This is none other than the splendid art of the motion picture with all its novelty and varying shades of meaning (ibid.).

In the hands of a magazine publisher, movies had become supreme emotional nourishment for humanity. That was quite a staggering claim. Perhaps today’s marketing phrases are a bit subtler, but certainly no less endearing than their turn of the century counterparts, those enthusiastic heralds of progress. And, if metaphysical notions were not enough to compel attendance, there was always the allure of glamorous actors and exuberant musical scores.



A photoplay ticket would give you an organ overture—the Superba Theatre being the home of the *mammoth* Wurlitzer organ—as well as a newsreel, a comedy sketch, a cartoon and the featured picture, an entire day of fun. And, if you still had your doubts about the redeeming value of movies, you could view your patronage as an act of emotional self-healing. “Today, one can find a picture to suit every mood, for pictures are as varied as moods.” You were certain to find something soothing, no matter what your disposition. But there was even more going on than mere amusement and movie therapy. During those early days of film, a massive transformation was taking place, determining how people would perceive fame and “stardom,” for many years to come. Interestingly, audiences of that era were just beginning to take comfort in following celebrities, those distant figures who smiled and cried on cue and seemed like trusted friends. After all, what kept theatres going was that *emotional* connection, “stars” promising excitement and romance in contrast to the boredom of daily life. One such luminary was Norma Talmadge, an adopted daughter of San Diego.

The cover of the Thursday, June 19, 1919 edition has a picture of Talmadge gazing out at the world, her eyes looking a bit teary, perhaps to pique the curiosity of fans. And yet, the magazine itself has a tale to tell. One can just make out a faint autograph, right below the winsome picture, her signature conveyed “sincerely,” to an unknown reader. It’s amazing to think that this periodical was once eagerly held and read by someone who probably followed the lives and works of “stars,” actors who have long since faded into obscurity. But Talmadge is a bit different. She and her sisters were all film stars whose ties to San Diego were extensive. Even if their work has mostly been forgotten—the premiere of *The New Moon* no longer being the talk of the town—the sisters’ impact on our city remains.

After learning a little about Talmadge, and finding her autograph on the old periodical I was reading, I became curious. Exactly how did she, and her acting sisters, figure into our city’s history at the turn of the century? For the answer, I went back to Samantha, who pulled out a copy of *Kensington-Talmadge: 1910-1997* by Dr. Thomas H. Baumann. Chapter three offers a chronicle of “The Talmadge Sisters.”

It seems that Hollywood, even in the early days, was a preferred destination for mothers of adorable children. This is how Peg Talmadge became acquainted with the movie industry.

The girls were born and raised at the beginning of the twentieth century, in Brooklyn, New York. While still young, their father deserted the family, and Peg had to become resourceful, finding her solution in the new industry of motion pictures. She began putting the children in New York films and eventually moved to Hollywood, “never failing to pick up the girls’ paychecks on time.” After investing wisely, and establishing trusts for her daughters, things came to fruition. The sisters Talmadge started their own production companies, married numerous times, became symbols of style and glamor from the teens all the way through the early 1930s, and purchased large tracts of land in San Diego (Baumann, pgs. 49, 50).

The eastern section of “Movie Girl” tract grew until it became Greater Talmadge. The area is located on a high mesa fringed by beautiful canyons overlooking Mission Valley and presents a comparable view of the colorful mountain range to the east (Baumann, p. 60).

Today, few if any San Diegans recall the lively sisters, after whom a quaint suburb is named. But thanks to the delicate pages of a magazine from 1919, we can see the face of Norma, at the peak of her career, read about her films and see the faint remnant of her signature. Even after a century, her story remains deeply connected to the development of our city; although she and her sisters have faded into obscurity, their land purchases remain a lasting legacy. Now, let’s turn our attention back to San Diego. Beyond remembering these silent film stars, we can read further in *The Chain of Blue*, to see how our city was perceived during the previous century.

San Diego was growing in leaps and bounds, in those days. It was indeed an era of great progress and development. And yet, nature—in a very romantic and philosophical way—was uppermost in people’s minds, as the world recovered from the Great War and prepared for the future. One can only imagine that ideas about human progress, as well as respect for beautiful, cultivated lands, would have been popular at the time, especially in a city where progress must have seemed unstoppable. Not surprisingly, we find that people of the previous century were just as reverent about our beautiful surroundings as we are, at the dawn of a new millennium. Balboa Park, even then, was held in high esteem.

Those who live in San Diego are very, very fortunate in possessing one of the most beautiful and ideal community gardens in the world. Balboa Park is yours and mine and everybody's. Any day that we so desire we may go up to the park and wander amid as gorgeous a maze of Nature's delights as ever was. And there are literally miles of it. An entire day would not suffice for the enjoyment of it all (Thursday, April 3, 1919).

Now, there's one final thing for me to consider, a mystery regarding the name of this periodical. What was the actual *chain* of blue? On the front of most of the magazines, a blue chain winds around each cover element, framing portraits of film stars, highlighting the various theatres owned by the amusement company. However, no indications are given as to where the chain originated or what it might represent. Was it symbolic of theatre culture, in general, or specifically related to San Diego? If anyone knows, please inform me.

With that, I can say that *The Chain of Blue* has been quite an exciting stop on what is sure to be a long and enjoyable excursion, an archival tour of San Diego history. In particular, I was fascinated by the literary quality of the stories. As one would expect, there was quite a bit of publicity woven into the magazine, its purpose being to promote the burgeoning silent film industry. And yet, the philosophical musings, as well as the warm references to Balboa Park, were well-executed. One could easily say that it was literary art with a marketing mission; editors exploited intellectual currents of the time, using metaphysical ideas, and psychological notions about mood and emotion, to sell tickets. Subtlety was not their forte. Really, there was more than a little desperation in the tone of the articles. But who could blame them? As the articles of incorporation reveal, the Broadway Amusement Company had great ambition, and the magazine was used to accomplish a number of missions. But most of all, *The Chain of Blue* served to preserve the memory of a fascinating time. Just as live theatre was making way for motion pictures, a new method of promotion was beginning to take shape, one which would serve not only the Talmadge sisters, but succeeding generations of "stars," even to this day.

With this bit of research accomplished, I plan to continue investigating the subject of film history and the dramatic arts, in order to discover more about this fascinating aspect of our culture. Flipping through the pages of a magazine, nearly a century old, makes me very curious. In addition, it might be interesting to learn about preservation methods for films and periodicals, how they are maintained for future generations to enjoy. There are many related subjects to consider, so please explore the references at the end of this piece.

Join me next time for another journey into the joy of reading primary (and secondary) sources. As always, I will make a trip to the San Diego History Center, surprise myself with a random topic, and delve into a fresh research project. Perhaps we will see each other there!

For Further Research:

Dimendberg, Edward. *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*. Cambridge, 2004.

Huyssen, Andreas. *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film*. Cambridge, 2015.

Rodowick, D.N. *The Virtual Life of Film*. Cambridge, 2007.

Simon, Joan (Editor). *Alice Guy Blache: Cinema Pioneer*. New York, 2009.

Stamp, Shelley. *Lois Weber in Early Hollywood*. Oakland, 2015.

Thompson, Kristin. *Storytelling in Film and Television*. Cambridge, 2003.

Turvey, Malcolm. *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Film of the 1920s*. Cambridge, 2011.

For historians, the silent film era has a wealth of topics to offer, from the development of motion picture technology to the culture it created. *The Bioscope*, available online, provides an extensive catalog of periodicals of the era, listed by country.

Also, make sure to check the following websites the next time you find yourself online:

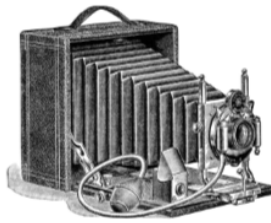
National Film Preservation Foundation website

“Caring for Books and Paper” (The American Library Association)

“The National Film Preservation Board” (The Library of Congress website)

Of Ideas and Images:
Exploring Photographs at the San Diego History Center

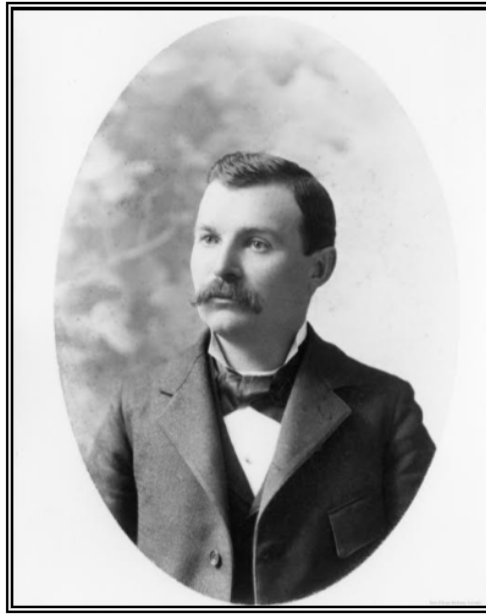
A.M. Palmer



Is a picture really worth a thousand words?

When I was a child, back in the 1970s, my mother and I took numerous rolls of film to our local Fotomat, after birthday dinners and family gatherings, excitedly awaiting the yellow envelopes we would collect a week or so later, hoping that our candid shots would be more than a blur of colors and that everyone had remembered to smile for group photos. Those were the days. As I recall, my father and grandfather were always fond of tinkering with cameras, so we took a great many pictures, at a time when development was something of a chore. Indeed, Fotomat was a significant part of our lives. After my parents passed away, and I was preparing to sell our home, I was delighted to find a number of those yellow picture envelopes languishing in drawers and hiding in the midst of old paperwork. As I rummaged through the remnants of our life, I would pause—sometimes for hours—to explore the many forgotten images of our family's past; the great aunts and uncles who died while I was still a child; the family dog I had nearly forgotten; our many excursions to Yosemite and the far reaches of Colorado. Back in the 70s, such photos were little more than mementos of people and places that seemed all too familiar. A few decades later, however, I began to view these snapshots as bits of hidden treasure; they became my only record of beloved relatives and the years we shared. With this in mind, I begin my new exploration of the San Diego History Center. This time, I wish to focus on photographs and the stories they convey.

From previous visits, I remember seeing the many boxes that contain the photograph collection. Numerous timeframes and subjects are captured for the ages, hundreds of images of people and places relevant to our city's rich past. But what do I wish to investigate? Actually, I have something very specific in mind; I wish to bypass images of well-known locations and individuals to discover unidentified subjects, people and places who languish in nameless obscurity and pique our curiosity. When viewing an unnamed stranger, from the shadows of a previous century, we move from particular questions about the details of the image, to a more general appreciation of our shared humanity. We examine the subject's eyes. We regard the setting and try to imagine ourselves in the environment, feeling the sunlight of long ago, perhaps sitting uncomfortably on frontier furniture or sweltering in layers of clothing. In short, old photos enable us to appreciate our predecessors and even empathize with them, to an extent. Let's take a look at a few examples that illustrate my point.



The San Diego History Center

In searching for images, I had only a few requirements in mind; the subjects had to be unidentified, clear enough to see in a reproduction, and possessed of an interesting demeanor, something tangible enough to reach across the many years separating us. This photo seemed to fit the bill quite well. The quality of the image caught my eye immediately. A crisp set of gray tones accentuates details of clothing and facial features, bringing one face-to-face with the previous century. But who was he?

The first thing one notices regarding this photograph is the quality of it. The artist/technician behind it was well-acquainted with the technology of the day and highly skilled at using it. Such expertise would not have been inexpensive. This, combined with the fact that the man in question was splendidly attired, and bore no marks on his complexion to indicate heavy exposure to the sun—or the marring effects of poor nutrition—indicates that he was probably well-to-do. But these modest observations do little to reveal his actual identity. What is our next step?

When in doubt, it's best to consult an expert. I return to Natalie Fiocre, the photo archivist, for assistance in finding out who this man might have been. The question of identity has taken precedence over my original plan, which was simply to muse about old photographs and the ideas they evoke. It's time to put a name to this face from the previous century, and review whatever information we can find regarding his biography. As it turned out, Natalie was able to locate the envelop in which the photo had been received. She showed me a small brown bit of paper, clearly bearing the name of the man in question: Frank Lynch, a prominent San Diego industrialist. My original plan, of examining unidentified pictures from the previous century—to the exclusion of well-known historical figures—has necessarily been modified, granting me an excellent opportunity. It's now time to supplement my philosophical musings with a solid bit of research. Let's see where this portion of the journey leads us.

A letter from Frank Lynch's great nephew, Robert Lynch (dated May 5, 2008) provides us with an excellent place to begin our inquiry.

Frank Lynch went into the farm machinery business in Castleton, North Dakota in the late 1800s. He was very successful, but the severity of the North Dakota winters became too much for him and his wife, Georgia to bear. In 1909 Simon Benson of Portland, Oregon sold his interest in the Benson Lumber Company of San Diego to Frank Lynch. Obviously, that brought about the move (. . .)

Continuing, we note that Bea Evenson mentioned having spent a few days at the Shepard House in 1925, when she first arrived in San Diego, during the time that Frank and Georgia Lynch owned it. The full transcript of Evenson's interview can be found at the San Diego History Center. Information like this, in addition to the letter from Lynch's great nephew, gives us a fuller idea of who the man in the photograph was—and would become—as his life unfolded. Interestingly, pictures of Lynch in later years reveal a more determined gaze, with a bit less softness, an expression quite befitting a seasoned industrialist. With all of this in mind, let's return to the original topic and continue pondering our old photos.

As I go through the boxes of unidentified photographs, I am struck by the poignancy of the images, men and women wearing their best clothes, bearing earnest expressions, conveying stories that can be imagined but never fully known. Quite simply, these people remain mysterious. Although a few images bear witness to their lives, most information about them has been lost to the passing of time. And what about the details of a picture that truly remains unidentified? For a moment, I'd like to digress and reflect on a photo I held and thought about for a while, and offer a few words of interpretation without showing you the image. In the end, it resembles countless other photos, the fading image of someone who remains unnamed and mysterious to historians.

One can see a compelling bit of sadness in this man's eyes. Clearly, he has donned his best attire, been fully coiffed and assumed a pose reflecting the dignity he wishes to convey. However, his eyes hint at the possibility that he is humble rather than proud, and merely borrowing the elegance of a new suit rather than declaring his wealth and prestige. In so many portraits, it seems as though the subject is reminding us of his power and influence, or her great prominence, assuming the attitude of a grand life. This man, however, is different, as he remains unassuming even in his best suit. And perhaps this is why portraits are so fascinating: self-revelation takes place in the midst of posing for posterity. But the pose falls away as soon as the eyes are revealed. This is what really captured my attention about this photo of an unnamed man who looks rather sad. Yes, this description could fit dozens of old photographs, pictures that languish in archives and old family albums. And this is what truly fascinates me.

Indeed, so many people passed through the various phases of San Diego history; merchants, laborers, business owners, wives, mothers, children at play, crowds walking the streets, the list is vast. And this brings me to another observation; each one of us carries the details of our personal history through the cities we call home. Countless bits of conversation, paperwork, relationships and employment histories link us to *places* as much as they connect us to loved ones and associates. With this in mind, let's return once again to the nineteenth century, to study a photo—which remains unidentified—and consider what we find. Owing to the clarity of the image, in addition to the time period—the 1880s—I found this example to be quite compelling, the clothing and furniture being as far-removed from styles of the twenty-first century as one could imagine.



The San Diego History Center

Who were they? Unlike the previous subject, their eyes seem to convey a bit more in the way of purpose and confidence, as if they are presiding over an elegant home, with more than a little life experience attending them. The interior is alluring with an ornate rug, carved furniture and a nicely finished wall, bearing some sort of fabric covering, perhaps a textile of bright colors and subtle texture. This was not a sparse frontier home. Rather, it was an affluent residence of the 1880s, from which a successful businessman and his wife oversaw their affairs, raised their children and planned for the future—which included this image, a memento granted to posterity. That’s one possibility. However, the truth could be far more intriguing or even more mundane. For the time being, we simply don’t know.

Whereas Frank Lynch, the man in the first picture, looked rather humble and uncertain, one perceives assuredness bordering, perhaps, on a bit of coldness, with the subjects of this photo. Although the husband is seated, his eyes reveal a readiness to confront the issues of the day, a gaze of steely determination, matched quite well by his wife's demeanor of strong assurance. I selected this photo for its technical quality, in addition to the compelling nature of its subjects. Really, I find it quite moving to realize that this husband and wife, who took such pains to be remembered in a dignified manner, are all but forgotten today. True, we have their image. However, it invites speculation rather than promoting a genuine understanding of who they were—as individuals and members of nineteenth century society. Were they childless? Did they have so many offspring that they longed for a quiet photo session and an afternoon to themselves? Perhaps one day we will know. In the meantime, imagining their narrative—according to nothing more than the evocation of their eyes and the setting in which they posed—is interesting. It speaks to a number of important issues about nineteenth century society and human interaction, all of which fall outside the scope of this reflection. In short, they just seemed like interesting people from long ago. Hopefully, they will be the subject of further research. Next, let's move into the next century and take a look at an archetypal living room in all its suburban splendor.



The San Diego History Center

This unidentified Coronado home will likely look familiar to someone who sees this piece. Although it's a bit too bright, a great deal of detail is present in this photo, speaking clearly of its postwar context. Actually, it reminds me a bit of my own childhood home, which is probably why I selected it for this reflection. The setting is warm and gracious, but hints at the fact that living rooms of that era were more for show than actual living—furniture remaining pristine long after its purchase, curtains falling in measured folds, and decorations sitting undisturbed for the enjoyment of guests rather than family members. These elements belong to a bygone time. At any rate, I can look at this photo and imagine the care and labor that attended it. Everything that was intended to look charming and spontaneous was, in actuality, curated with the greatest precision—a true showplace. One finds it hard to imagine that the fireplace ever contained smoke and flames or that the carpet was ever marred by footprints. Carpet? In those days, hardwood floors would have been quite unthinkable. Yes, my mother would have felt quite at home in this unidentified living room from the past.

Considering the Analysis of Images:

The joy of writing reflections—rather than academic histories—has to do with the art of speculation. Moving spontaneously through ideas and *what if* scenarios, not with the structuring devices of a fiction writer or the romance of a poet, but merely by way of curiosity, likens one to a child discovering new surroundings. Nevertheless, there is quite a bit to the subject of interpreting images, formal methods which might lend an additional bit of depth to the photographs we have just seen. With that in mind, let's consider the analysis of images a bit more deeply. From there, we can return to the old question of whether or not a picture is indeed worth a thousand words. In preparation for this part of our journey, I wish to reference two books: *Understanding a Photograph* by John Berger and *The Rings of Saturn*, a novel by W.G. Sebald.

Photography Contrasted to Painting:

How does a collection of brushstrokes, skillfully executed on canvas, paper or even stone, contrast to the chemical (or digital) rendering of an image, a replica achieved in the blink of an eye? Drawing on a considerable body of work, including the writings of Walter Benjamin, Berger offers a wealth of ideas.

“Every relation between forms in a painting is to some degree adaptable to the painter's purpose. This is not the case with photography” (Berger, p. 25). In other words, a painting is deliberately transposed from the mind of the artist, and rendered according to his skills and choices, hence the title of fine art being ascribed to the work. A photo is different; it captures a scene—objects, people, landscapes etc.—to the extent that the device in use can replicate reality. It can be dry and factual, as in the photography employed by journalists or academics. Or it can be expressive and Avant Gard, as in the case of photos we consider high art. Here, I should note that I disagree with Berger, who feels that the photographer's labors should not be listed in the fine art category. I think that the choice of subject matter, and the skill by which an image is captured and presented, certainly qualifies photography as a potential expression of fine art, the fruits of which can stand confidently in the most reputable museums and art galleries. Nevertheless, the “mechanical reproduction” of an image may cause some to doubt its merit as art. Those issues aside, I find that I am impacted by a powerful photograph as much as I am moved by a brilliant painting. And yet, it is quite useful to contrast these art forms in order to appreciate their many distinctions.

As I look back on the pictures of our reflection, I realize that I would not find them nearly as compelling had the images been painted rather than photographed, the latter art form conveying a particular sort of atmosphere that the former often lacks, at least in my estimation. One feels that a conversation could easily take place with the people, and that an afternoon of tea and laughter could be enjoyed in the Coronado living room. Somehow, a painting, even composed of refined brushstrokes and exquisitely blended colors, would fail to intrigue me in the same way. By contrast, a photo is something of an invitation to life and shared experience.

In addition to reading Berger, I also happened to be finishing a novel by W.G. Sebald, at the time of studying these photos. *The Rings of Saturn* is a work largely founded on the power of images, in particular, *The Anatomy Lesson* by Rembrandt, also referenced by Berger in his insightful theorizing. Clad in gentleman's garb, examining a corpse for scientific study, the figures in the painting are stark and severe in their respective roles of audience and lecturer. The picture is jarring. Death is shown without the benefit of drama or subtext, providing no hint of who the man on the table was or how he expired. And this raises a question about the image: would it possess the same impact were it a modern photograph depicting an autopsy or the elements of a crime scene? One aspect of its allure has to do with history, the fact that we are seeing painted images of men who lived and died long ago. Attesting to how they differ from us, and are yet similar to the people of our own time, the figures speak volumes. Although old photographs can do something analogous, the particular arrangement of painted themes and images renders them timeless in a very different way. As Berger puts it, photos offer us a “play on time,” but paintings, in my estimation, offer a strange dissolution of it.

Continuing with *The Rings of Saturn*, I learn much more about the overall power of images, be they photographic or rendered in oils and acrylics.

The narrative unfolds like something of a dream; spontaneous and rather impersonal in its movements of form, color and texture. It's difficult to get a sense of the main character and his ever-changing surroundings, as Sebald narrates the man's story. And yet, we find that the many pictures the author includes in his text serve to connect us to the protagonist, very deeply. Not only does he show us photos of the images and events he is describing, but Sebald also employs a powerful prose style to tell his story. Consider the mood and atmosphere he deftly conveys.

That morning, as I closed the marbled cover of the log book, pondering the mysterious survival of the written word, I noticed lying to one side on the table a thick, tattered tome that I had not seen before my visit to the Reading Room. It turned out to be a photographic history of the First World War, compiled and published in 1933 by the *Daily Express*, to mark the past tragedy, and perhaps as a warning of another approaching (Sebald, p. 94).

The text is accompanied by a black and white photo of a sinking battleship. The image brings us into the fullness of the protagonist's experience and invites us to share his ruminations about life and the tragedy of war. But Sebald goes further; on the next page, as he continues his narrative about the horrors of war, we find a photograph of the tunic worn by Archduke Franz Ferdinand on the day he was assassinated. In the hands of a lesser artist, such devices might seem out of place or overwrought. However, Sebald manages to augment the power of his story with well-chosen photographs, images that reflect the mood of his narrative, without being so blunt as to depict the actual likeness and experiences of the protagonist. Such is the power of photography.

As I look back on the photographs examined in this essay, I think of them alongside the ideas of Berger and the narrative structures of Sebald. We find that the absence of painterly control over content and execution may limit the artistic merit of photographs, in some people's eyes. However, the sense of atmosphere and shared humanity conveyed by the photographic image cannot be denied or written-off as a mere duplication of reality. A photo reminds us of the sadness, hope, fear and joy of a moment long passed away into memory.

Now, back to the original question I had in mind, as I began this essay. Is a picture worth a thousand words? Looking back on my own family photos, culled from those yellow envelopes of the 1970s, alongside a few beautiful images from San Diego history—and the writing of W.G. Sebald—I can answer in the affirmative. A picture is worth at least a thousand words, in addition to a great deal of thought, and, quite possibly, a few sighs, as we remember those who came before us.

If you wish to explore the photographs of the San Diego History Center, make sure to consult their helpful, knowledgeable archivists. Let them know what you are looking for, and they will guide you through the finding aids and the wonderful collection of photos documenting our city's history. I thank them for all of their assistance with this project.

For Further Research:

* Visit the Edmund L. and Nancy K. Dubois Library at the San Diego Museum of Photographic Arts to explore their holdings. If you have an interest in monographs and exhibition catalogs, to name but two categories, the library will be of great interest to you.

* The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Photographs was established in 1992. You can read about its history, and learn something about the department's 25,000 works, on their website. If you wish to study the very beginning of photography, you will find, in their vast collection, a number of works dating from the 1830s, when the technology first emerged.

* The Library of Congress also has a great deal to offer in this area, as well. Check their "Prints & Photographs Online Catalog" to view their extensive collection of images, including roughly 700 daguerreotypes and nearly 7,000 Civil War glass negatives.

Suggested Reading:

Berger, John. *Understanding a Photograph*. New York: Aperture, 2013.

Coe, Brian, Paul Gates. *The Snapshot Photograph: The Rise of Popular Photography, 1888-1939*.

Goldberg, Viki, Robert B. Silberman. *American Photography: A Century of Images*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999.

Hershberger, Andrew. *Photographic Theory: An Historical Anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

Kowalski, Pawel. *Applied Photographic Theory*. London, New York: Wiley, 1972.

Schlereth, Thomas J., Editor. *Material Culture Studies in America*

Shepperley, William. *A History of Photography*. London: Arthur Press, 1929.

Tani, Tadaaki. *Photographic Sensitivity: Theory and Mechanisms*. New York, London: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Turner, Peter. *History of Photography*. New York: Exeter Books, 1987.

Zuromskis, Catherine. *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013.



Thinking About Biographies:
A Glance at the Life of William Templeton Johnson, San Diego Architect

A. M. Palmer

The other day, I thought back to a trip I took to Chicago, a number of years ago. As I strolled North Michigan Avenue, in the sunlight of early September—engulfed by urban canyons formed by skyscrapers—I encountered something that stopped me in my tracks. In front of a massive glass office building were several cones, placed in order to warn passersby of an obstacle, a hazard of some sort that spanned the entire entrance of the structure. I became quite curious. On closer inspection, I noticed several ropes dangling in the midst of the orange cones. I followed them up the side of the building and discovered, to my astonishment, two distant figures rappelling down the glass curtain wall, moving from side to side with ease, so high above the street that I strained my neck to observe them. They were window washers. Who else but skilled climbers could do such a job? Looking back on that exciting occasion, and recalling my lifelong fascination with tall buildings, gave me an idea for a research project.

For this installment, I begin my archival journey with architecture in mind. Moving amid the buildings of San Diego, one encounters so many forms and design theories from the past; the elegance and austerity of Spanish Colonial Revival, a few Greek columns, here and there, and the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement surround us. Indeed, wherever we look we find ourselves embraced by a rich architectural heritage, brimming with styles and influences. More than this, however, we have a great many brilliant practitioners to thank for our city's structures, the designers who sat hunched over drafting tables and drew, with pens and pencils, the beautiful forms that define our architectural landscape. As I entered the San Diego History Center, prepared to investigate this fascinating subject, I kept all of this in mind. And, as I did so, I became increasingly curious about the personalities behind our built environment. Who were they? How did they formulate and accomplish their elegant visions of life? How did they create their drawings and negotiate the building materials of their day? To explore these questions, I expanded my focus to include the subject of biography, in order to learn more about the minds behind our civic structures and great private homes. In short, what I attempt here is a reflection on my own journey, something of a primer for further investigation. Perhaps, after reading this piece, you will be inspired to visit the archives and delve into your own research project. I hope that will be the case. For now, join me in retracing the steps of my own research journey, as I formulate my reflections. First, however, I want to take a moment to think about the scope of biography and architecture, to create something of a schematic.

The two subjects blend seamlessly on many levels. A biography, the retelling of a life, is very much like a building; comprised of a foundation and divided by walls of experience, a life story shelters the hopes and dreams of a single person, impacting many other people in the process. If I stretch the analogy, I can even begin to see a gathering of life stories—each one being erected in close proximity to certain others—as something akin to a neighborhood, where multiple structures must coexist in the same environment. For the moment, this comparison gives us an interesting point of departure. Now that we have a bit of a schematic, illustrating how the two disciplines relate, we can begin to consider the overall journey of research, the task of exhaustively sorting through archives. In short, it is often an adventure of personal discovery.

As one approaches the contents of an archive, the many boxes of photos and documents awaiting perusal, the doors of possibility open. After hours of sorting through sales records, or bits and scraps of correspondence, a picture emerges from history, perhaps one you did not anticipate. In any event, an archival journey is an adventure. I begin my own exploration with this in mind.

As always, I started by pulling a box from the shelves, this time from the architecture collection. I opened Book 1 of Box 23, which bears the name of William Templeton Johnson, and the adventure unfolded.

As soon as I began turning the pages of building plans at the front of the book, all of them beautiful in their symmetry and organization, I was struck by the fact that these drawings represent actual historical structures, created by a dean of architecture—our very own. At that point, I had a better idea of what I was in search of, since it seemed to be taking shape before my eyes; I wanted to reflect on the history of architecture and the minds of its creators, specifically as the subject pertains to civic structures in San Diego. With that thought, I continued turning pages until I reached a set of old photographs, one of which captured my attention. It was the wedding picture of a couple from the early twentieth century, the bride leaning on her new husband's arm as he gazed confidently at the photographer, with a bit of a smirk on his face. At that point, I was really curious. Who were these people, and what did they have to do with the subject of historical architecture? Of course, the man was William Templeton Johnson, on the day that he began building his life story. Research on the photo revealed that he and Clara Delafield Sturges, his first wife, posed for it on June 21, 1905.

Up until the time of my research trip, I had known of Johnson only in passing, as the name behind numerous civic buildings and private residences of great beauty, and this makes me think; how interesting it is that we explore the recesses of world history, hoping to learn about the distant past, when our own communities are often rife with prominent figures who lived quite recently. Sometimes it's best to start by examining local history, and the many fascinating people and events it can reveal. So, who was this man, as an architect?

At the end of Book 1, I found a list of dates and points of interest. Provided by Julie Johnson Iavelli, Johnson's granddaughter, the typed sheet was her attempt to place some of the photos in proper historical context.

He was born on August 31, 1877 in Staten Island, New York and passed away in 1957, shortly after his 80th birthday. His second wife was Helen Hayes Gleason. Also of interest is a brief entry pertaining to "The Mission Hills home: 4520 Trias Street, built in 1917 and sold in the 1940s." Other points on Iavelli's timeline reference a picture of Johnson and his sons, Winthrop and Arthur (her father) and a studio portrait for which he sat during the 1920s or 30s. So, with that, I had a few pieces of the puzzle in place, just enough to begin my acquaintance with the subject at hand, and pique my curiosity even further. Now, let's see what was said about him by Kay Jarvis, in the Wednesday, September 26, 1973 edition of the *Evening Tribune*:

William Templeton Johnson.
The name conjures images of the best prep school,
a shipboard crossing of the Atlantic for studies at
one of the great schools in Paris. There would be
a spacious apartment on the Rue du Luxembourg,
a pretty young wife, who entertained often and
well and giddy outings by touring car.

Now, we are beginning to see a more detailed picture of the man in question, the story of a life filled with opportunity and privilege unknown to most. At the outset, I'm curious about how the vantage point of great schools, spacious apartments, and giddy outings informed his work. For the answer to this question, I decided to study a few photos and drawings, also found in the first book of Box 23.

Immediately, as I began turning pages, I was intrigued by what I discovered; a dramatic set of black and white photos of a residence in Seville, Spain emerged, a structure designed by Johnson early in his career. The front of the building was bathed in a latticework of shadows, bits of sunlight filtered by a sheltering tree, the main feature of what appeared to be a freshly-manicured yard. I found it spectacular. Although a grand residence, each view of the house suggested subtlety as well as elegance, bringing to mind what Johnson must have learned from his extensive studies abroad. Clearly, his view encompassed the great traditions of the past, his structure sitting beautifully in its environment and historical context. From this initial bit of research, I could see that Johnson understood, quite early in his career, how to address local circumstance with elegance.

I considered another view of the residence. From this angle, one could see even more trees, cultivated to suit their purpose of providing shade and ambience. I also noticed that the walkways adjacent to the house were unpaved, and that the building appeared to be situated on a fair amount of land. The scene was stately yet rural; it was the home of a wealthy family in a nation of agriculture, a place where dirt walkways mingled comfortably with mansions. After his tours of Europe, Johnson understood well how to interpret artistic influences from a number of countries, and apply them astutely to the demands of his clients. The details of the Seville residence make this clear. However, I had thus far only examined the outside of the home. If the exterior was captivating, in all its grace and rural elegance, what might the inner spaces reveal?

As I turned the page, an interior view captured my imagination immediately, being, perhaps, the most dramatic of all the photos I had recently seen. The room was a token of the Spanish Renaissance, containing a number of quintessential elements; heavy wooden furniture adorned the space, granting a healthy compromise between elegance and austerity. It reached out to command the viewer's full attention. In addition, copious high windows flooded the room with light, softening any hint of aloofness conveyed by the furnishings and the massive space. Also of interest were the chandeliers that interrupted the great volume of the room, lending a sense of purpose and formality to the arrangement. It was easy to imagine Johnson sitting quietly in the space he designed, perhaps chatting with the owners about art history.

As I continued exploring the book, I found no dates on the photos, so I had to rely on the information provided by his granddaughter to place the era of the Seville residence. In addition to the typed sheet, there is also a handwritten list of dates and structures, an essential source for anyone attempting a biography of the architect. However, my task of the day was limited to reflection, a very basic consideration of the material available on the subject. With this in mind, I continued examining the photos before me, wondering what else they might reveal, as I prepared for the next stop on my journey.

To understand the life of an architect, it makes sense to pay close attention to his theories and built work, even prior to delving into his relationships and the associations he entertained. So, I'm glad I had a chance to see some of Johnson's early endeavors, just to get a glimpse of his personality and habits of mind. Restrained, consummately well-educated, and devoted to reinterpreting traditional forms with dignity and flair, all of these tendencies speak to the overall mindset of this architect. However, in order to understand more about Johnson's vision, and the workings of his mind, I needed to examine some of his drawings.

Architectural plans were once on a par with fine art, viewed as aesthetic treasures as well as essential tools of construction. For this reason, I needed to see the renderings authored by Johnson. But how would I navigate the collection and actually understand what I was seeing? I found myself to be very much in luck. At the time of my visit, Assistant Archivist Samantha Mills was working to catalog Johnson's drawings, so the task was far easier than I expected.

I waited at one of the research tables, as Samantha navigated the archives and retrieved the first set of plans I requested. Johnson's north and south elevations of the Serra Museum, from 1929, would give me an excellent point of departure. In addition, I also decided to study an assortment of his mixed media pieces from an earlier period.

As I examined the Serra drawings, the first thing I noticed was the paper. Samantha and Jane Kenealy came over to examine it and provide some much needed input. What was I seeing, exactly? Jane noted that the vellum was thicker and possessed more of a rag content than what she expected. The sheet before us looked almost like wax-coated tracing paper, containing printed markings rather than hand-drawn lines. She concluded that these were intended to be working drawings, probably for use in the field rather than client presentations. I found it to be a beautiful piece of work, both functional and aesthetically rich. I considered this, as I looked at the footings of the upper tower, dated February 26, 1929. From there, I reviewed the various elevations, each one carefully marked according to degree. This investigation provided me with a fresh perspective on one of our most cherished structures.

As for the quality of Johnson's draftsmanship, it's important to note that he was very much a part of the Beaux-Arts tradition, and well-versed in the intricacies of technical drawing. Having studied his craft according to these methods, he was comfortable with complex, Renaissance-inspired designs, and thus able to address client demands on a number of levels. With his extensive education and training, he understood how the phases of a building project were to unfold, and how each artist and craftsman needed to execute certain tasks. Not only did Johnson's draftsmanship enable him to communicate basic ideas, it also helped him to articulate the unique qualities of his vision, the fusing of Spanish Mission and Colonial elements with the exuberance of the Spanish Renaissance.

As for his full contribution to the architecture of our city, it's incredibly rich and far-reaching. We remember Johnson for creating a number of residences and municipal buildings, structures which neither called out for attention, nor did they challenge fundamental ideas about design and aesthetics; rather, the work followed the character of its maker, offering an understated, functional expression of elegance. From the Fine Arts Gallery at Balboa Park and the open courtyard at Francis Parker School in Mission Hills, to the Classical forms of the La Jolla Public Library and the County Administration Building, his vision enriches us.

Johnson's mark on San Diego is broad and long. After study and travel throughout Europe, he returned to San Diego in 1912 to design some of the best examples of Spanish Renaissance architecture and to incorporate his rigid training in directions ranging from Georgian Colonial to French Norman.

The majority of his work was accomplished between 1912 and 1945 and included a number of fine private homes (Jarvis).

Here, I would like to digress for a moment to consider how I view Johnson's San Diego buildings, according to my own profession as an urban park ranger. More than anything, I find it a joy to incorporate architectural appreciation into my patrol routine, either by providing tours for the public, or by simply pausing throughout the course of the day to appreciate the beauty of the Natural History Museum, or to stop and notice, for a few moments, the Spanish influences evident at the Serra Museum. The fact that we, as park rangers, are tasked with protecting cultural resources and educating the public about them, is the joy of my professional life. Reflecting on the work of Johnson reminds me to appreciate patrol work on a much deeper level. Now, let's return to the subject of studying sources on Johnson's life. Beyond merely browsing and reflecting on exciting discoveries, what is the substance of the task at hand? In short, there are many more things that I must read and consider if I wish to get a handle on this vast subject.

Another useful resource to consult is *San Diego Architects 1868-1839*, produced by the University of San Diego Department of History Graduate Division. Written under the direction of Dr. Ray Brandes, the book provides a wealth of information on our city's distinguished architectural history, even going so far as to include the license numbers of each architect profiled. Here, we learn that Johnson is remembered as being "the man who put the Spanish stamp on San Diego's architecture" (p. 94). Most important for me to explore, however, is the 2008 San Diego Historical Society lecture, *Historic Places: Celebrating the Architecture of William Templeton Johnson*. The presentation included a great deal of information, not the least of which pertained to his work with George Marston. And this presents another aspect of my journey of reflection.

To begin my own quest of writing Johnson's biography, I might flip through pages and note things of interest and curiosity. Next, were I to continue this process, I would need to study every book, lecture and monograph in existence on this subject to see where additional research needs to be conducted. In short, I would need to ask (and answer) the question of how a biographer can enhance the body of existing work to provide a more detailed portrait of William Templeton Johnson, San Diego architect.

Overall, I feel as though I'm off to a good start, as I begin to see the portrait of an outstanding architect taking shape before my eyes. However, if I want to write a biography, there are still many more things to consider. For example, I need to know as much as possible about Johnson's writings. A quick check of the World Catalog provides me with a partial listing, which I will include in the bibliography of this piece. Although his theoretical writings are of great interest to me, at the moment, I am also curious about a letter related to Johnson and Paul Phillippe Cret, from 1911.

I venture online to explore this subject a bit further. Accompanying a bibliography of Cret's works, there is an intriguing picture of him, looking very much like an elder statesman of design theory. Cret—the architect who employed Louis Kahn from 1929 to 1930—must have carried on extensive and interesting correspondences with his contemporaries. The University of Pennsylvania Library, where Cret's papers are kept, mentions the letter in question, which concerns a municipal planning exhibition. The letter "comprises a copy sent to Cret of correspondence to Johnson from Flavel Shurtleff," who also figures prominently in the history of urban planning. This adds a new and promising angle to the project of researching Johnson's life.

Now, we have some useful points of reference for our biographical research. As we move through a few details of someone's intellectual and creative life, we begin to see how his mind worked, or how her professional vision was expressed. Taken in combination with a look at family life, correspondence and publications (or other creative works), such details enable us to paint a portrait, at first with broad brushstrokes and muted tones, and then with a bit of fine detail and bold color, as the picture takes shape. It's a challenging task, to piece together a life (and to do it reasonable justice) but a useful and important one, no doubt. More than anything, the genre of biography invites us to converse with an interesting character across a vast expanse of time, or a modest interlude of less than a century, as in the case of Johnson's life story. Now, let's switch gears and return to the topic of building.

A Few Thoughts on Architecture

Take the vision and scope of an artist, add a bit of philosophical insight, and, finally, combine the mixture with a sound knowledge of mathematics and building materials, and you have an architect. This wonderful combination of abilities and passions is why I admire the discipline. In fact, for many years, I have been something of an amateur architectural historian, always marveling at the eloquence of Ruskin and the visual poetics Louis Khan, reading books of criticism far more often than I visit the buildings I admire. This is something I must correct. At any rate, to conclude this reflection on biography and architecture, I thought it would be fun to examine another type of persona, the counterpoint of the creator, the critic.

In the field of architecture, most critics possess practical experience of the discipline, many of them with their own thriving practices. They are artists, practitioners, and writers of a very specific kind whose realm is complex, to say the very least.

Anyone who has passed through an architect's studio knows that the happy—or sometimes highly strained—mingling of technical acumen with soaring artistic vision can be quite fruitful. Perhaps this is why a wealth of florid essays have accompanied the discipline for centuries. The greatest practitioners know that we *experience* buildings on a deeply personal level, in addition to inhabiting them. We require their soundness, for the obvious sake of safety, but we also need them to offer efficiency and comfort. And, even beyond these elements, we demand that our structures fulfill us emotionally and enhance the atmosphere of our lives, no small task for a designer. The skilled architect understands how to engage and interpret spaces, rendering forms in a way that will resonate with the greatest number of people. Some achieve this by focusing on treatments of light and shadow, while others work to create massive open spaces artfully. Indeed, rendering functional space more pleasing and livable is a constant challenge. How can a skilled architect keep things interesting? Certain practitioners are known for their ability to layer openings and lend texture to what might otherwise be nothing more than a box with windows. Or, perhaps, the architect gives us a box and challenges us to find it spiritually meaningful. The possibilities are numerous. With this in mind, I consider one of my favorite writers in the field, Michael Sorkin, whose work I discovered thanks to my old philosophy professor. I offer this digression for a reason; a careful review of critical pieces on architecture can reveal the Beaux-Arts transition to modernist forms, as well as the rise of postmodern developments.

When I was in architectural school in the early '70s, it seemed almost impossible to practice architecture. Building was so bound up with structures of power, the only responsible thing, I thought, was to resist . . .”
(p. 1).

With his eloquent prose, Sorkin writes about buildings with the insight of a practitioner and the candor of a critic, something I find very helpful as I attempt to understand this discipline. His focus, while writing for the *Village Voice*, involved capturing the spirit of his own age, while interpreting the buildings that defined it, his own form of resistance and resolution. This kind of writing offers a powerful context for experts as well as aficionados, a lens through which to view changes and the development of ideas. In art and architecture, the characteristics of one era simultaneously give rise to and subvert works of the past, a tendency very much in evidence during the twentieth century. In *Exquisite Corpse: Writing on Buildings*, Sorkin guides us through his own view on this process, focusing on the postmodern dimensions of New York. As I read him, I became more and more interested in the subject of *style* and how critics invent categories by way of certain attributes and characteristics. If I wish to delve deeper into my study of architecture, I will need to investigate this aspect of the discipline in great detail. For the moment, however, I will entertain a final digression.

An important thing to bear in mind, when placing Johnson's work in historical context, has to do with the relationship between the Beaux-Arts tradition and that of the modernists, who began to emerge during the 1930s and reached their height of influence during the 1950s and 60s. It was certainly a great period of creativity and transition. With this in mind, I open the pages of *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography* by Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst, to ponder the subject a bit further. In particular, I read chapter 5, "Political Crises and the End of the Bauhaus: 1930-36." This is helpful because it discusses the ideas and historical contexts that eventually supplanted the Beaux-Arts methods, and introduced the world to new materials, simpler forms, and a fresh set of philosophical notions.

As the Bauhaus moved into its latter years, and projects like the Gericke House were developed—with its free plan and multiple levels of interlocking rooms—change was on the horizon. In fact, there is an interesting bit of overlap between Johnson's career and that of Mies van der Rohe, architect of the Gericke House (and the mid-century modern movement as a whole) at least in terms of chronology, if not aesthetics. During a time when European architecture was beginning to embrace newer materials and a fresh treatment of mass and volume, Johnson seems to have remained a traditionalist, albeit an insightful and creative one. Whereas the Beaux-Arts school emphasized mass and void in the richness of their plans—clearly evident in Johnson's Seville House—modernists defined space in the elongation of simple, unadorned forms. With their long, horizontal homes, and the massive vertical reaches of their glass-clad skyscrapers, modernist architects rejected the use of Renaissance elements, creating, instead, minimalist structures which were warmer and more conducive to family life and productivity in the workplace, at least in theory. Keeping these ideas in mind will prove useful as I continue to investigate Johnson and the discipline of architecture.

Final Thoughts

A reflection is a method of inquiry *and* a product of the writing process. By reflecting a bit on one of our city's most elegant architects, I have initiated a process of investigation which could lead me in a number of different directions. In particular, I am interested in the Cret correspondence; a letter from one innovator to another could reveal a staggering array of ideas and events to investigate. Beyond the subject of biography, however, there is the compelling presence of architecture.

In the course of flipping through a few pages in the archives, I have done little more than scratch the surface of a vast and beautifully complex subject, the history of architecture, in general, and the splendid buildings of San Diego, in particular. Nevertheless, my process of investigating and reflecting has allowed me to augment the schematic I first mentioned at the beginning of this piece. I can now begin to navigate sources on the history of movements in architecture, while investigating the discipline's most illustrious practitioners and teachers. And herein lies the joy of it all; as we research and reflect, we can write the story of others while defining the scope of our own lives. Everything connects. I wish you all the best in your own journey of thinking and writing about life.

The Local Buildings of William Templeton Johnson:

(*San Diego Architects 1868-1839*, p. 95)

Francis Parker School, 4201 Randolph Street, San Diego (1913-1915)
La Jolla Public Library, 1006 Wall Street, La Jolla (1921)
Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park, San Diego (1924-1926)
San Diego Trust and Savings Building, 6th and Broadway (1927-1928)
Junipero Serra Museum, Presidion Park, San Diego (1929)
Base of el Cid Campeador Statue, Balboa Park, San Diego (1930)
Museum of Natural History, Balboa Park, San Diego (1932)
U. S. Post Office, "E" Street (7th and 8th), San Diego (1937)
Six schools, three government housing projects (1940s)
San Diego State College, Master Plan (1949-1954)
San Diego Public Library (1954)



William Templeton Johnson, San Diego History Center



Seville, Spain Residence, San Diego History Center

For Further Reading:



The Works of William Templeton Johnson:

“Archaic Architecture of New Mexico”

The Santa Fe of the Future, 1916 (no publisher information found online).

T.J. Grows Up on Staten Island, 1957 (no publisher information found online).

Also of interest are the Laura Winthrop Johnson papers, 1862-1889, containing information on the Shaw and Johnson families.

Correspondence to Paul Philippe Cret, 1911 (Contributed by Flavel Shurtleff and contained in folder 239 of the Cret papers at the University of Pennsylvania Rare Book & Manuscript Library)

Outstanding Critical Biographies:

Claussen, Detlev. *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2010.

Composed with examples of Adorno’s writings, and detailed by his professional dialogues and associations, this book offers an incisive look at the most acclaimed member of the Frankfurt School.

Gross, Neil. *Richard Rorty: The Making of An American Philosopher*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

As a sociologist, Gross brings his unique understanding of demographic research to the craft of writing a biography. He extrapolates the details of Rorty's life meticulously, while keeping the larger context of academic politics and the rigors of social science research well in mind.

Lyon, James K. *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation, 1951-1970*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Although not a biography in the strictest sense, this book tells the story of two great intellectual lives. Lyon chronicles the detailed study Celan undertook of Heidegger's works, as well as the philosopher's appreciation for the poet, an interaction that spanned nearly two decades of intense scholarship.

McCarter, Robert. *Louis I. Kahn*. New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2015.

This detailed study of Kahn's career, his vastly complex geometries, his understanding of volume, light and shadow, as well as his philosophical journey, helps us to fathom one of our nation's greatest architects. From Kahn's use of the cruciform, to his modern treatments of brick and heavy stone, this architect's innovations were extensive.

Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst. *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Richly illustrated, this critical biography captures the innovative thinking for which Mies is so admired. The authors enable us to converse with a superlative draftsman, the architect who worked so well with structural steel and developed the vernacular of tall buildings "sheathed in glass."

Architecture Criticism and Theory:

Eve Blau and Nancy J. Troy, Editors. *Architecture and Cubism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002.

With this collection of essays, the relationship between early twentieth century painting and the discipline of architecture is explored by a number of scholars. For those who wish to understand how these two disciplines converged at a crucial point in modern history, this book is essential reading.

Le Corbusier. *Towards a New Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications, 1986 (first reprint).

Le Corbusier embraced the notion that people can be rendered more rational by way of creating cities and buildings with logic in mind, a position he articulates clearly with vibrant and expansive prose. As one reads his book, it becomes clear that the dwelling and the dweller were part of this architect's grand experiment.

Moore, Rowan. *Why We Build: Power and Desire in Architecture*. New York: Harper Design, 2013.

Here, we find a superb analysis of the motives behind great buildings and the development of architectural theory.

Ruskin, John. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications, 1989 (first reprint).

Perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of architecture has to do with its relationship to philosophy. When Ruskin set about studying Gothic buildings, he did so with an eye towards finding the true essence of architecture, an understanding which transcends the mere building of structures. By restraint, in his estimation, the designer can achieve greatness and find wisdom according to the seven lamps: Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience.

Scruton, Roger. *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013

“As we shall see, words like ‘intention’ and ‘idea’ with their mentalistic, subjective, artist-oriented implications, are far from being forced on us as necessary instruments in the critical description of architecture” (p. 53). When philosophers examine the art of building design, readers learn both disciplines by way of detailed concepts and specialized vocabularies. And what could be more fun? We can answer that question: “Freud, Marx and Meaning” (Chapter 6).

Scully, Vincent. *Architecture: The Natural and the Manmade*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991.

Interior spaces, structures, and personal experience are at the heart of the architecture Scully considers here, in this insightful assessment of world civilization. It serves as an indispensable resource for those wishing to discern where (and how) innate spiritual perspectives find expression in the built environment.

Sorkin, Michael. *Exquisite Corpse: Writing on Buildings*. New York: Verso, 1994.

For an incisive look at architecture, the culture of theorists, and the purveyors of building styles, this collection from the former *Village Voice* critic is essential and wonderful reading.

Spuybroek, Lars (Editor). *The Architecture of Variation*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2009.

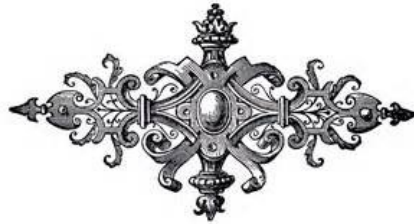
Architects devise brilliant theories, a great many of them. And this collection of essays spans a wide cross-section of their most progressive insights; the mathematics of variation, *bioconstructivism* and textile computing among them. Anyone who loves to explore ideas, interdisciplinary studies, and the excitement of shape and texture will enjoy this book a great deal.

Stern, Robert A. M. *Architecture on the Edge of Postmodernism: Collected Essays, 1964-1988*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009.

“Post-Modern architects prefer incomplete or compromised geometries to pure forms . . .” (p. 112). Just how well the vagaries of post-structuralism transfer to the realm of literature—as explored by Jacques Derrida—or how relevant they are to theories and practices of architecture, opens up fascinating inquiries, explored at length by Stern. From his detailed examination of the Pepsi Building on Park Avenue, to his considerations of how eras and genres blend, Stern’s essays are wonderful reading for architecture enthusiasts.

Folio Eight

Worksheet Templates



Date:

Page:



Orienteering Journal

Location/Lat/Lon: _____

Map Notes/Declination: _____

Conditions/Terrain _____

Problems Encountered _____

Skills to Work on: _____

Expedition Notes & Sketches:

Date:

Page:



Birding Journal

Name _____

Classification _____

Taxonomy _____

Last Sighting _____

First Sighting _____

Life Total Sightings _____

Total Photos & Sketches _____

Date:

Page:



Hiking Journal

Location/Lat/Lon: _____

Terrain: _____

Conditions: _____

Gear Notes: _____

Injuries/Health Issues During Hike: _____

Distance Covered: _____

Day Use Permit Information: _____

Ranger Station Information: _____

Checkpoints: _____

Hazards/Trail Maintenance Issues Noted: _____

General Notes & Observations:

Date:

Page:



Fitness Journal

Location/Workout Emphasis _____

Name of Trainer _____

Weigh-in Data: _____

Equipment Used: _____

Current Goals: _____

Calories Burned: _____

Reps/Distance Completed: _____

Additional Notes on the Session:

Field Research Form

Project Name:

Work Site:

Location Data:

Date:

Pate Number

[illegible]

Writing Notes & Exercises:



Date:

Page:



Photography Log

Location/Project: _____

Camera Body: _____

Lenses: _____

Additional Equipment: _____

Conditions: _____

Subject Matter: _____

Notes on Settings Used: _____

Release Form Information: _____

Publication(s) Receiving the Images _____

General Notes & Observations Regarding the Shoot:

About the Author

A. M. Palmer has been a municipal park ranger, writer, visual artist and copyeditor since 2001, with essays appearing in the United Kingdom and Australia. Prior to that, Palmer volunteered as a public relations writer with the Red Cross, and completed internships in exhibit curation at the San Diego Maritime Museum while in graduate school. With an interest in sound design, rare books and fountain pen repair, the author stays busy.

Selected Publications of A. M. Palmer

Urban Park Culture: Celebrating the City Park Environment
(Summer, 2020)

Sharp Silhouette: A Literary Magazine (Summer, 2020)

“Neighborly Intrusions: Thoughts on the Art of Living Next Door”
(*The Opiate Magazine*, Volume 21, Spring, 2020)

“Our Technological Age of Ease and Frivolity”
(*Packintown Review*, Spring, 2020)

“Bubble Man: Thoughts on the Strange Beauty of Street Performance”
(*Midway Journal*, Winter, 2020)

“Alone in a Silent Grove”
(*October Hill Magazine*, November 15, 2019)

“City Parks: The Urban Expression of Nature”
(*The Green Light: A Literary Journal*, September, 2019)

“Fading Horizons: Regarding the Decline of American Mall Culture”
(*Belle Ombre Literary Journal*, Spring, 2019)

“Having a Pension: The Last America Dream Becomes an Element of Myth”
(*The Bangalore Review*, March, 2019)

“An Ascent: Considering the Shadows of a Stone Staircase”
(*Adelaide Literary Magazine*, August, 2018, Finalist, Literary Award Competition, 2018, Awards Anthology contributor)

“Red Wine in the Neighbor’s Garden: A Few Moments without Technology”
(with photo) (*The American Wine Society Wine Journal*, Spring, 2018)

“The Sense Tour: Educational Programming for the San Diego Blind Community Center”
(*Parks & Recreation Magazine*, December 6, 2017) (with photo)

“Nighttime Landscapes: A Memory of Iridescent Green”
(Adelaide Voices Literary Contest, 2018, Essay Category Finalist, *Adelaide Literary Magazine Awards Anthology*)

“Archivist Interview with Jane Kenealy”
(Friends of Balboa Park Website, 2017-2018) (Available at the San Diego History Center Archives)

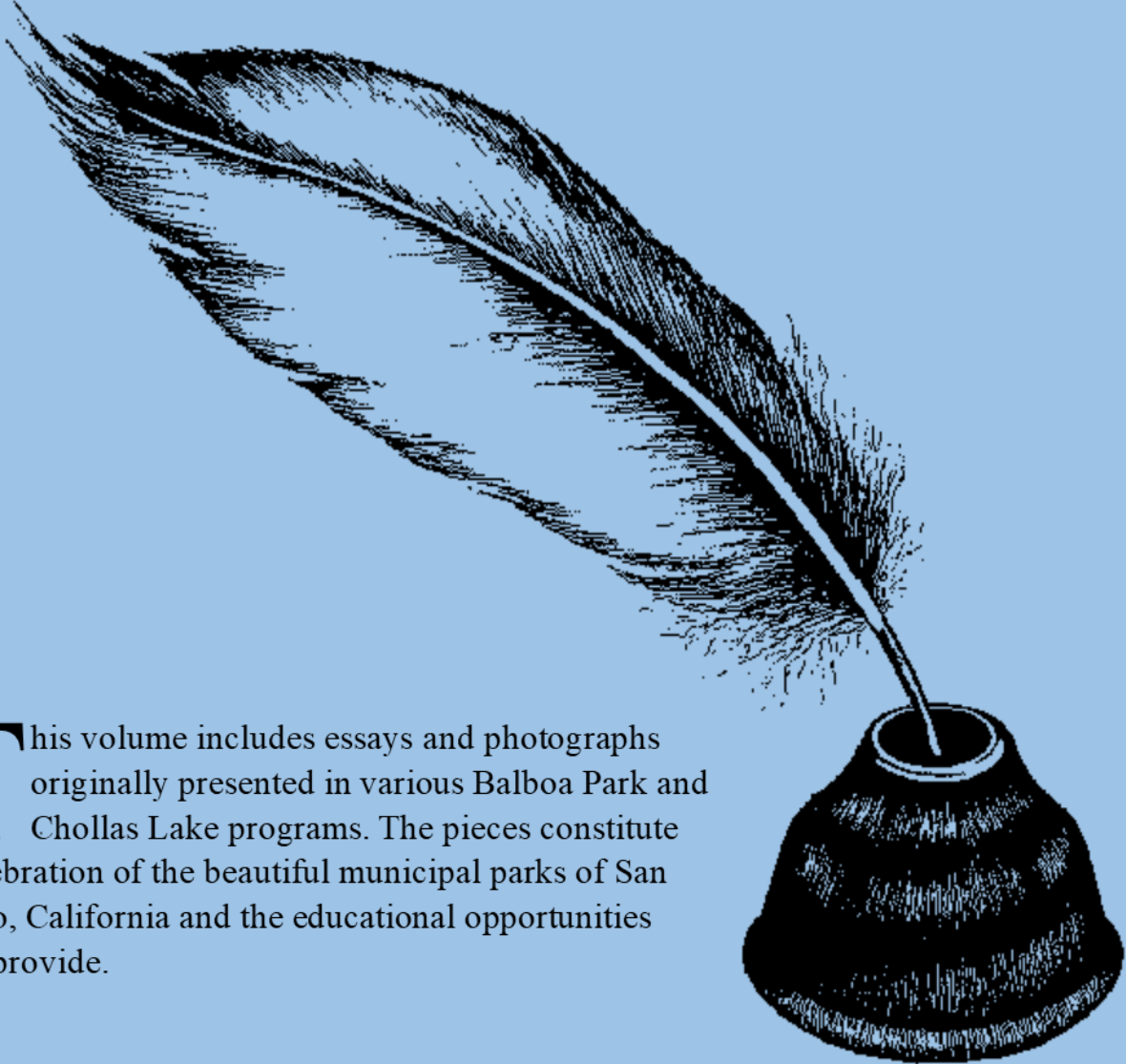
“The Oral History Project at the San Diego History Center: An Interview with Jane Kenealy”
(Friends of Balboa Park Website, 2017-2018) (Available at the San Diego History Center Archives)

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A detailed black and white illustration of a quill pen, likely a turkey feather, resting in a small, dark, bell-shaped inkwell. The quill is angled upwards and to the left, with its tip submerged in the ink. The inkwell has a textured, possibly woven or leather-like surface. The entire illustration is set against a light blue background.

This volume includes essays and photographs originally presented in various Balboa Park and Chollas Lake programs. The pieces constitute a celebration of the beautiful municipal parks of San Diego, California and the educational opportunities they provide.

*Urban Parks bring the comforts of nature
into the busyness
of our daily lives.*

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